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MOTORSPORT NEWS

FULL
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REPORT
P20

O'GIER

HOLDS HIS NERVE IN SWEDEN



WRC STARS CLAIM LACK OF VOICE ON SAFETY FEARS P2



ALFA ROMEO EYES F1 RETURN P4

MOTORSPORT NEWS ISSUE **MJ3014** FEBRUARY 17 2016

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World rally stars will repeat calls to skip
WRC DRIVERS


Meeke believes WRC drivers should react in unison and be in a position to take action

By David Evans

Leading drivers in the World Rally Championship remain ready to boycott stages on any round of the series if they feel their safety is being undermined.

A stage strike was narrowly avoided on last week's Rally Sweden, after the majority of drivers felt they were not sufficiently consulted on the compromised weather conditions.

The crews called a meeting between themselves at 0600hrs on Friday, before the start of the opening leg, and decided to drive directly to the day's second test, bypassing the Torsby stage by way of protest. The move was foiled when Hyundai factory driver

Hayden Paddon refused.

The drivers will meet again before round three starts in Mexico on March 3 and FIA officials are ready to work with them to avoid the threat of similar action on future events.

Last week's second round of the World Rally Championship came close to being cancelled after warm weather melted the snow and left the stages free from the vital ice layer required to make the studded tyres work.

Following the recce, world champion Sebastien Ogier said the only workable roads were in Norway – and called for the gravel-based roads in Sweden to be scrubbed from the itinerary.

Ogier and Northern Irishman Kris Meeke pushed for the drivers' voices to be heard in a series of meetings leading up to the start and when they were ignored, they sought to take action further by not driving the first stage.

Ogier told MN: "We think it's not normal we are not consulted on such things. We have to meet each other again in the future and make sure that we have the place to take part of these discussions, with at least one driver taking our views to these meetings."

Rally Sweden's revised and shortened itinerary ran without

issue, but Meeke said the drivers stood firm on their actions.

"We need to do this [drivers' group] in a proper way," Meeke told MN. "If we're not happy then we need to be in a position where we can call the shots – or at least have an input into the calling of the shots. We don't want it to get to an embarrassing situation where we're heading out on a road section and going against the grain of the rally. But, we're ready to look at this kind of action again [if we have to]."

Some of the drivers' frustration goes back to Rally Australia last year, where there was a feeling that driving dusty, gravel stages in the dark was unsafe.

Meeke added: "I talked [to the FIA] in Sweden and I was told we have to communicate these concerns before the event – before Australia, there were about 25 emails in the three months since the itinerary came out and nothing happened. We were all pissed off about that during the rally and when we leave the place, we're told: 'When you come back next year, you'll be doing three night stages...' At that point we need to go and park up."

Meeke feels the commercial side of running rallies has taken precedent over the sporting



Ogier wants consultation

HEADLINE NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

stages if safety threats are ignored

IN BOYCOTT THREAT



Paddon refused to boycott the Torsby stage

aspect. "Ten years ago," he said, "this rally would have been cancelled and the reason it wasn't cancelled this time is because of the money – money's starting to dictate now. Nobody understands that when you drive on these tyres with no studs, it's a total nightmare. The speeds we're doing here, you just can't do it."

"Decisions are being influenced and economics are coming over safety. We're becoming puppets being sent out because they need to make television to make money. If they had tried to run the stages on full gravel, it would have made a mockery of the sport. It's time to have some respect for our sport. Somebody needs to grow a pair and admit that our sport's bigger than this sort of thing. If Sweden can't deliver a winter rally, we don't come back."

FIA rally director Jarmo Mahonen refuted allegations that safety was being compromised.

"Of course that is not the case," he said. "Do they really think we would jeopardise safety? Of course not. Eighty per cent of the stakeholders costs had been spent just before the start, so cancelling would have had [financial] implications, but it's ridiculous to suggest we would ever jeopardise safety for this."

"I understand the drivers' feelings. After they had done the recce in the worst conditions, I think the drivers could only see the rally's dark side. Personally speaking, maybe they didn't realise the weather could change."

The forecast freezing conditions duly arrived – along with heavy snow on Friday – and only one further stage (Lesjofors on Sunday) was cancelled once the event started.

"Maybe I am naïve to think the drivers talk with their employers," said Mahonen. "At every meeting, I asked the team managers: 'What do your drivers think?' It seems nobody is trusting anybody at the moment, there is no faith. This needs to be cleared out, we will have a meeting with them in Mexico. But we need to know the marching order: Do we talk to their employer or to them directly?"

"We have to listen to them and of course – especially where safety is concerned – we will listen to them. But, at the same time, we should remember there's no sport where the actors decide the regulations. We have to look [at] what we can do together."

Mahonen also questioned the motives behind the rush to prevent the Rammen stage on Saturday going ahead.

"It mainly came from Volkswagen," said Mahonen, "so they were worried Ogier has to open the road again. So maybe he's going to lose, so this was behind [it] – not safety."

Volkswagen team principal Jost Capito denied any such moves, saying: "He knows me good enough that I would never do something like this. If we did that, how could we be trusted in future discussions. We only talk about safety. We never put any competitive move into that. That would be completely wrong."

Mahonen said he was happy to consider a drivers' briefing which would offer all crews the opportunity to air concerns ahead of the event.

"If they want it and think it's needed, we have nothing against that," he said. "It's a good way to communicate with the drivers. We are supposed to be on the same side and maybe a drivers' briefing is a good way forward – maybe we don't need it for every round, but after the recce it's good to talk with them."

The FIA's rallies department has recently been restructured in light of requests for a recognised driver to pass through the stages to check their condition. Michele Mouton, a four-time world rally winner

in the 1980s, now works as safety delegate and drove the stages numerous times to assess their condition.

She told *Motorsport News*: "What's the reason I did this? The reason I did this is for the drivers. To give them the best information and to be sure the road is safe. It's for this reason we cancel some stages before the start."

Citroen team principal Yves Matton favoured the establishment of a drivers' group, but added that it needed to be done in a structured way.

"For me," Matton said, "it would be normal that they have this association to be able to speak with the different stakeholders, but I was convinced this meeting from Friday morning was not something that could achieve anything; you cannot make decisions like this at the start of the competition."

Hyundai rallying boss Michel Nandan said crew safety remained at the top of the list of priorities for the manufacturers.

He told *MN*: "We are not completely stupid, if there is a risk for the driver, we will not send them to the stage."



Mahonen insists FIA wouldn't jeopardise safety

RACING NEWS

F1 ROUND-UP

B-spec boost

Nico Hulkenberg reckons Force India is on a solid footing for this year's world championship thanks to its success with last year's B-spec car. The Silverstone-based team introduced its new car at last year's British GP, and it helped the team to finish fifth in the Constructors' Championship. Hulkenberg said: "If you look at all the different tracks, the different tyre compounds, whatever, with the B-spec we are more or less in a position where we can score good points on every track on any day."

K-Mag revved up

Renault new boy Kevin Magnussen will be extra-motivated this year after his axing by McLaren, according to team-mate Jolyon Palmer. Magnussen was part of McLaren's race team in 2014 before being relegated to third driver for last year and eventually dumped by the team. Palmer said: "He's a good driver who has proven what he can do in F1 already. If they [McLaren] were struggling to decide who should stay between Kevin and Jenson [Button], then it says something. I'm sure he's going to be unbelievably motivated to show McLaren why he shouldn't have been dropped."

Italian job

Italian Grand Prix organisers will meet Formula 1 tsar Bernie Ecclestone later this month in an attempt to thrash out a deal to secure the future of the race at Monza. The venue's current contract to host the race expires at the end of this year, leaving question marks over the future of the event. F1 chiefs want to see improvements made at the track and extra investment before committing to a long-term deal. Automobile Club of Italy president, Angelo Sticchi Damiani, said last month that he was close to tying up a deal to secure the race until either 2020 or 2023.

'F1 is easier'

Mercedes claims that F1 is now easier for a new manufacturer to get into since the hybrid V6 engines were introduced. Andy Cowell, managing director of Mercedes AMG High Performance Powertrains, said: "The V10s and V8s were so specialist, 20,000 or 18,000rpm naturally-aspirated engines were very peculiar, there were no other motorsport categories doing that. For a company that sells cars and is doing the efficiency and technology drive, the current rules make it easier for them to say 'we want to go and compete in F1'. In the old days you'd spend ages working out what the bore size should be or how many cylinders you should have. Now it's all in the regs."

Jordan's Top Gear

Ex-F1 team boss Eddie Jordan has joined the new presenter line-up for the BBC's *Top Gear* programme. Jordan had been a regular pundit for the BBC's F1 coverage from 2009. Jordan will join host Chris Evans, Sabine Schmitz, Chris Harris, Rory Reid and Joey from *Friends*... err, we mean Matt LeBlanc.

ALFA ROMEO EYEING FORMULA 1 RETURN

Italian firm to look at grand prix comeback for image boost



Top man Marchionne



Last Alfa works team in 1980s

By Rob Ladbrook

Italian firm Alfa Romeo will be evaluating a return to the F1 grid as a full constructor, according to company head Sergio Marchionne.

Speaking to *Gazzetta dello Sport* newspaper, Marchionne said that Alfa Romeo must look to rejuvenate its sporting image in the future, and that he sees Formula 1 as the perfect vehicle to do that.

Marchionne is the chairman of Ferrari and chief executive officer of the Fiat-Chrysler Group, which encompasses 15 brands including Alfa Romeo.

The Italian firm's name was linked

with an engine branding deal with Red Bull if Ferrari had agreed to supply the Milton Keynes team with power units following its apparent split from Renault. Those talks broke down when Ferrari opted against such a deal, leaving Red Bull to run TAG Heuer-branded Renault engines this season.

However, Marchionne insists Alfa Romeo must make a larger commitment to F1 than just branding an engine if it is to return. He has suggested that a technical link up with Ferrari would be the best way to make the project work financially for both teams.

Marchionne said: "In order to re-establish itself as a sport brand,

Alfa Romeo can and must consider the possibility of a return to racing in Formula 1. How? Probably in collaboration with Ferrari. It would be a classic example of a business model to follow. You couldn't imagine a Red Bull brand associated with Ferrari. I say this because they criticise me for not giving them our engine; we either want them in or out. But in the end this sport must be saved. The important thing is to make other car manufacturers enter grand prix racing.

"Alfa Romeo is able to make itself a chassis, and it is able to make engines. I would really like to have it in Formula 1."

Alfa Romeo has a strong history in

the sport's top flight. It powered Giuseppe Farina to victory in the inaugural world championship grand prix at Silverstone in 1950 and that year's title in a 158 model. Juan Manuel Fangio took the 1951 championship for the brand. The firm then had a spell as an engine supplier between 1961 and 1979, most notably powering Brabham while also developing its own chassis.

Alfa Romeo returned as a factory team in 1979 with the 177. It scored two poles and five podiums but remained winless until it withdrew from the sport after the 1985 season. Alfa continued to supply engines to the Osella team until the end of 1988 and briefly to Ligier.

Manor signs DTM champion Wehrlein as Mercedes-backed drivers land F1 roles



Manor has last vacant seat in F1

Mercedes-backed drivers Pascal Wehrlein and Esteban Ocon have both secured Formula 1 chances this year, with Wehrlein joining Manor as its first race driver.

Wehrlein's deal was announced last week. The 21-year-old became the youngest DTM champion last season when driving for Mercedes HWA. Wehrlein's appointment strengthens Manor's links to the German firm, which will supply its power units for 2015.

Wehrlein said: "Manor Racing is a great place for me to start my F1 racing career. It's a small and totally focused team and I soon hope to know everyone.

"Though it's my first F1 season my aim is to help Stephen [Fitzpatrick, owner] and the guys achieve their goals. "It will be a tough challenge, but we

should be able to challenge for points along the way."

Manor has yet to sign its second race driver, leaving that as the sole available seat on the grid. Briton Will Stevens has been linked with a return to the team.

Meanwhile, GP3 Series champion Ocon has joined Renault Sport F1 Team as its reserve driver, as well as racing in the DTM with Mercedes this year.

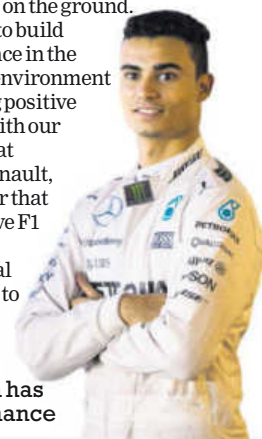
Mercedes head Toto Wolff said both Wehrlein and Ocon had earned their opportunities this year: "It is very pleasing to see young drivers earning their spot in F1 on merit and to see that talent is being rewarded by the system.

"Pascal and Esteban have proven themselves to be amongst the top young drivers out there – and both come into 2016 as champions of their respective

series. But they still have plenty to learn and they will be staying humble, with their feet on the ground.

"Our aim is to build their experience in the best possible environment and, following positive discussions with our counterparts at Manor and Renault, it became clear that their respective F1 programmes presented ideal opportunities to achieve that."

Wehrlein has Manor chance



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'Karters can win an MSA Formula season'
Big prize for FKS class, p29



Photos: Euan Cameron, LAT

NORRIS SECURES THE TOYOTA RACING TITLE



Norris took another win in New Zealand

MSA Formula champion Lando Norris claimed the Toyota Racing Series title last weekend in Manfeild and also became the first Briton since Jackie Stewart in 1967 to win the New Zealand Grand Prix.

The 16-year-old secured the championship in the second race of the weekend with fourth place, and he finished the season with victory in the Grand Prix finale – notching his sixth win of the campaign.

He finished 135 points ahead of closest rival Jehan Daruvala in the standings.

"It's been a brilliant experience out here in New Zealand, made all the better by winning the title," said Norris. "To take the title with a race to spare meant I could relax in the final race and to follow in the footsteps of a legend like Sir Jackie Stewart by winning that is a real honour."

"At 40 minutes and 35 laps it was the longest race I've ever taken part in, but I really enjoyed it. To get eight out of 10 poles overall was a great effort in the end. It gives me a lot of confidence going forward."

Norris had been on course to win the opening race of the weekend, but lost out on the restart following a safety car and could only finish third, behind Ferdinand Habsburg and James Munro.

He settled for fourth in the reversed grid second race but was a comfortable winner in the finale.

Norris joins an illustrious list of Britons who have won the New Zealand Grand Prix, which also includes Formula 1 stars Graham Hill, John Surtees and Stirling Moss.



Norris: first Briton to win NZ GP since Jackie Stewart

Franchitti tips Chilton for top

Dario Franchitti believes British F1 convert Max Chilton has the capacity to surprise his critics as an IndyCar rookie this season.

Chilton completed his first test for Chip Ganassi Racing at Sonoma Raceway last week, and described his maiden experience of the Chevrolet-powered Dallara DW12 as "a bit of a shock".

The ex-Marussia F1 driver has turned to America after his stint as a Nissan LMP1 driver ended with the termination of the Japanese marque's programme.

IndyCar legend Franchitti won four titles and three Indianapolis 500 victories during his career in the States and will work with Chilton as part of his role as an advisor with Ganassi.

"He's got the tools but it's a steep learning curve," Franchitti said. "You don't go from being a rookie to Scott Dixon in six months, it doesn't work that way. If he's ever going to achieve, he'll need time."

"I think he'll do a good job. I think he'll surprise people and I'm looking forward to helping him do that."

Chilton's limited pre-season programme will also take in a maiden oval run at Fontana before tests at Sebring and Phoenix.

"I was quicker than I thought I would be," Chilton said of the Sonoma test.



Fortec is one team that is facing European F3 exit this year

Top teams face FIA European F3 exit after rules row hurts market

Up to four teams are likely to be absent from this year's Formula 3 European Championship, including British outfits Fortec Motorsports and Double R Racing.

French squad Signature and Team West-Tec may also not take part, as there's an apparent lack of drivers with the budget and desire to compete in the series.

The 2016 grid should feature between 20 and 25 cars, well below last year's record of 36.

Fortec boss Richard Dutton said: "We're talking to drivers but there don't seem to be any with a budget. I think the FIA have overestimated the market – they seem to think there are a lot more drivers out there than there are."

"We've got two cars ready for FIA, but we're looking at following Carlin and doing two in Euroformula Open [for current Dallara chassis with spec Toyota engines], which you can do for virtually half the money, and we

could convert them back [to FIA spec] for Macau."

"It's really sad we can't find drivers for FIA and we won't quit F3 for sure, but we have to do whatever the market demands."

Double R principal Anthony Hieatt added: "I've switched off the Euro F3 programme now – MSA Formula and BRDC F4 is us."

"I'm not interested in doing it on a wing and a prayer and making these billionaire boys look better."

THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP



Formula E boss Alejandro Agag is targeting a race in New York for the third season of the all-electric championship. He is currently working on the 2016/17 calendar, which could feature up to 12 rounds,

although some of the existing venues could be at risk of being dropped. Potential new races in Canada, Australia and Switzerland have been discussed... World Touring Car champion Jose Maria Lopez would consider switching to Formula E when Citroen halts its tin-top programme. The Argentine came close to making a shock debut in Buenos Aires as DS Virgin driver Jean-Eric Vergne suffered from food poisoning. "It's [Formula E] something I like because of the level of the drivers, there are a lot of drivers I know and they race in very nice cities," he said... **GP2 champion Stoffel Vandoorne will race in Japan's Super**

Formula series this year with the Honda-powered Dandelion team that he tested with last year. The Belgian had previously said that racing in the category would help him keep "race sharp" while waiting for an F1 seat... GP3 runner-up Luca Ghiotto will graduate to GP2 with Trident this year. The Italian won five races last season... **Denny Hamlin held off Joey Logano to win NASCAR's Sprint Unlimited exhibition race at Daytona last weekend. The Joe Gibbs Racing driver was one of just eight to finish the race after three multi-car crashes wiped out much of the 25-car field...**



World touring car champ Lopez would like Formula E seat



Carroll wants a race seat

Carroll aims for Formula E switch

Adam Carroll is keen on earning a Formula E drive for season three of the championship.

The 33-year-old, a race winner in GP2 and the 2008/09 A1 Grand Prix champion, tested with Mahindra in the build up to the current campaign.

He was an unused substitute for the Indian team at the most recent round in Buenos Aires.

"It's a proper world championship, with a very exciting concept," he said. "As a professional driver I don't see how you can't be interested in it."

Carroll has been dovetailing frontrunning Blancpain Endurance Series, European Le Mans Series and British GT campaigns with driver coaching in recent seasons. He last raced a single-seater in 2011 when he scored a podium in a Formula Renault 3.5 one-off and won races for Campos – which helps run the Mahindra Formula E effort – in a bit-part Auto GP campaign.

Carroll's regular GT team, Gulf Racing, has secured a World Endurance Championship GTE Am entry. Only team owner Mike Wainwright is signed.

RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF



Hoy and Reip (right)

Nissan drivers leave

Nissan has opted to release a number of its GT Academy drivers from contract for this coming season. Russian driver Mark Shulzhitskiy, Gaetan Paletou and Wolfgang Reip have all been dropped by the Japanese brand. Shulzhitskiy won GT Academy in 2012 and raced at Le Mans with the ill-fated GT-RLM NISMO LMP1 project. Paletou [2014 Academy winner] raced in the European Le Mans Series' LMP3 class last year. Reip [European Academy winner in 2012] became the first driver to do an all-electric lap of Le Mans in the ZEOD RC in 2014 and also competed in British GT where he helped Sir Chris Hoy to his first GT3 podium at Spa.

NEC is A-OK

The Formula Renault Northern European Cup will go ahead unaltered this season after a disagreement over the promotion of the series (MN, February 3). Following talks between Renault Sport Germany and long-term promoter Mick de Haas, it has been agreed that there will be no change in promoter this season. The FRNEC begins at Monza in Italy in support of the Blancpain Endurance Series on April 23/24.

F4 for you

MotorSport Vision has repurposed its fleet of Ralph Firman-built BRDC Formula 4 cars for driving experiences at Brands Hatch. The Ford Duratec-powered cars were raced in the F4 championship from its inception in 2013 until being replaced by the new Tatuus-Cosworth cars for this year. For more information visit msvdrivinggifts.co.uk.

Butler returns

20Ten Racing has confirmed that Tom Butler will complete a full season of the Renault UK Clio Cup this year. He made his debut at the end of 2015.



Cole will drive a new Levorg

CAMMISH TO DEFEND HIS PORSCHE TITLE

Series dominator back for second full season



Cammish won 11 races during 2015



Cammish's new livery for 2016

By Stephen Lickorish

Reigning Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion Dan Cammish will return to the series this year, and plans to also race in the Porsche Supercup.

The 26-year-old will again drive for Redline Racing in the British series after agreeing a deal at the end of last season.

"It was decided at the back end of last year that I would be coming back," said

Cammish. "My sponsors had a great year and thoroughly enjoyed it and felt like they wanted to return. I had the option to go on my own or return with them. As a driver who spent most winters unsure whether I would be racing again it was refreshing to have it decided already.

"I'm still working on a deal to race in the Supercup as well and have got some good options. The plan was to have the British deal done so I could work hard on the

Supercup as that's what I want to do."

Cammish admits it will be "tough" to repeat last year's domination of the Carrera Cup, when he took 11 wins.

"I had such a great year and was never off the podium so I don't know how I can better that," he said. "But I'm still the same driver and I've got to dig deep and find the motivation to do it again.

"The problem for me is that it could be like Josh [Webster] last year [the reigning

champion struggled to repeat his success of the previous season]. But I've got the same group of people behind me as 2015, the same engineer and mechanic so I'm there to do the best job I can."

● Rookie champion Tom Sharp will also return to the category with his family-run IDL Racing team. "Last year went perfectly to plan, but we now go into 2016 with a completely different mindset," he said.

Jackson re-signs with Motorbase for British touring car assault

Former championship runner-up Mat Jackson has re-signed for Motorbase Performance to race in the British Touring Car Championship.

Jackson was the most successful driver over the second half of the 2015 campaign in the team's Ford Focus. The Wrotham squad joined midway through the

contest and Jackson, a 25-time race winner in the BTCC, will line up alongside Andrew Jordan in the two-car outfit.

"It is nice to get things done early," said Jackson, who tested the car at Brands Hatch last Thursday. "We need to get as many miles in as possible before the start of the season because we have new control

parts. We will be going to Portugal to conduct mileage over there and that will help us get to grips with the car."

Jackson said that he was looking forward to racing alongside Jordan in 2016. "I have never had any problems with Andrew and we know he is fast, so we will make a good combination," he said.



Jackson will drive for Motorbase for a seventh BTCC season

Cole completes Team BMR Subaru line-up

British Touring Car Championship racer James Cole will join Jason Plato, Colin Turkington and Warren Scott at Team BMR in 2016.

The former Formula Ford title winner will drive a fourth rear-wheel-drive Subaru Levorg, which is under construction.

Cole, who joined the BTCC in 2013, raced in a part-season in 2015 for the Motorbase Performance team.

"I am very happy to be going

back to a rear-wheel-drive layout, as that is something that will help me feel comfortable. My success has come with this configuration, and I think it will enable me to show what I can do," said Cole, who has also raced in F3 and F2 cars.

"The Subaru Levorg is a new project, but a great team and there is a lot of experience behind the scenes. I am in a great place to learn and move forward in 2016."

BRDC SuperStars 2016

DRIVER	CHAMPIONSHIP
Alex Albon	TBA
Alex Lynn	GP2 Series
Ben Barnicoat	FIA European F3
Charlie Robertson	Ginetta works driver
Daniel Cammish	Porsche Carrera Cup GB
George Russell	FIA European F3
Jake Dennis	GP3 Series
Jack Goff	BTCC
Jake Hughes	GP3 Series
Oliver Rowland	GP2 Series
Ross Gunn	British GT3
Will Palmer	Formula Renault Eurocup/NEC

BRDC expands its SuperStar list

The British Racing Drivers' Club has expanded its list of SuperStars to 12 drivers for this year, and scheme bosses have added three new names to the list of supported drivers.

GP3 Series graduate Jake Hughes, British GT4 champion Ross Gunn and BRDC Formula 4 champion Will Palmer have all joined the SuperStars programme, which enters its ninth season this year.

The BRDC SuperStars scheme provides all members with support on physical and mental preparation as well as a range of professional development workshops. BMW factory driver Alexander Sims and BRDC director Tim Harvey will mentor the drivers.

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*'GT4 is a global product
and it's a huge chance'*
Malvern gets British GT deal, page 8



STRAKKA ADDS NEW RENAULT PROGRAMME



Williamson has seat



Strakka will run one
R.S.01 GT machine

Former McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Lewis Williamson will return to racing this year after sealing a deal with Strakka Racing to contest the Renault Sport Trophy.

Williamson, 26 from Dundee, will share one of the R.S.01 GT machines with Strakka Racing regular Nick Leventis in the pan-European sportscar contest. The trophy programme marks an expansion for Strakka,

which already competes in the FIA World Endurance Championship's LMP2 division and the Formula V83.5 class. The Renault Sport Trophy shares a calendar with V83.5.

Williamson has past experience in the GP3 Series, but hasn't raced full-time since 2013. He said: "It's been a long two years but this is the perfect chance to get my career back on track and show what I can do."

"I've stayed involved in

racing through driver coaching and being an engineer, hoping something would come along. I've built a great relationship with Strakka and when Nick tested the car he loved it and asked me to share it with him. It works because the team is already at most of the tracks with the V83.5 cars."

Each Renault Sport Trophy weekend consists of a two-driver endurance race and then two shorter sprint events, allowing Leventis and

Williamson to share the car.

Williamson added: "I've never driven a GT car before as the McLaren test for the MABA Award came in the year after I won it [2010]. It will take some adapting to but the R.S.01 has good aero and grip, so my GP3 experience should help a lot."

"This year is huge for me as I need to show my potential. Strakka has a lot of other programmes in international racing and a good year could open up extra opportunities."



Blancpain
Lambo livery

Barwell to field third Huracan in British GT

Barwell Motorsport will field a third Lamborghini Huracan in selected British GT rounds this year, alongside a full campaign in the Blancpain Endurance Cup.

The squad will enter two factory-backed Huracans in the pan-European Blancpain class for Mark Poole, Richard Abra and Joe Osborne this year. In addition, that car will also run in a handful of British GT events, including the showpiece Silverstone 500 three-hour race. Barwell's second Blancpain crew will be revealed in the coming weeks.

Barwell will field two Huracans full-time in Britain, having signed Jon Minshaw and Phil Keen for one car and Liam

Griffin for the second with Fabio Babini and Alexander Sims rotating pro driver duty alongside him.

So far, Poole is the only driver confirmed for the third Huracan when it runs in Britain.

Team head Mark Lemmer said: "Mark [Poole] wanted to do some extra racing around Blancpain so we'll be doing Silverstone and Spa with three cars entered under the Barwell banner."

"The support from Lamborghini has been brilliant and we've been in constant contact with the factory."

Two of Barwell's cars will run for the first time in a private test at Valencia in Spain this week.

Donington Park joins Coventry Motofest team

Donington Park will work alongside the organisers of the Coventry Motofest to help promote motorsport in the Midlands.

Donington Park bosses have agreed to aid the promotion of the event, which brings race and rally

machines to the Coventry ring road for live action displays on June 3-5. Donington will also supply additional content from its race meeting schedule this season, and is hoping to arrange for BTCC, British GT, BRDC F4 and Formula 3 machinery to join the event.

Ginetta Scholar Harper to race for Douglas

Ginetta Junior Scholarship driver Daniel Harper will drive for the Douglas Motorsport squad this year.

Harper will join his predecessor Stuart Middleton at Douglas as he makes his circuit racing debut. He previously competed in the Junior 1000 Rally Challenge in Ireland, winning three rounds.

"I feel my versatility and ability to adapt to different conditions and driving techniques will put me in a great position," said Harper. "The Ginetta Junior



Harper won Scholarship

Championship is a superb platform for me as a young driver to improve and showcase my ability in a fantastically exciting formula, against top competitors in proper cars at proper tracks."

Collard plots BRDC F4 and Renault Eurocup

MSA Formula runner-up Ricky Collard hasn't ruled out a dual campaign in both the Eurocup Formula Renault 2.0 and BRDC Formula 4 this year.

The 19-year-old has tested both cars but is yet to make a decision on his plans for this season. He tested an F4 machine with Fortec Motorsports at Donington Park last week.

"I also tested with HHC Motorsport in an F4 car in Valencia. It had loads more power than I was used to with the MSA Formula car and seemed more of a racer's car, with great pace and it would really suit me," he said.

"I have tested the Renault



Collard tested with Fortec

too and would love to do both as I know [MSA Formula champion] Lando Norris is planning to do. I haven't committed to anything yet but would love to win a UK title, it would mean so much to me, so I may opt for staying at home this year."

Fortec also ran new recruit Tarun Reddy at Donington.

THE VOICE OF NATIONAL RACING

MATT JAMES

"Cars look the same, but BTCC has changed"



Externally, 2016 BTCC machines look the same

The new British Touring Car Championship season is bursting in to life with teams out putting their first decent mileage on their 2016 challengers and already many lessons have been learned.

Most of the leading runners have quite significant testing programmes planned ahead of the new season – much more so than in previous years. While the factory Honda team and Eurotech, along with Team Parker Racing, has darted off to Spain to conduct its mileage, others are pounding the circuits of the United Kingdom.

The reason that testing is more vital than ever this season is the raft of new RML-built control parts that drivers will be using this season.

After five years of GPRM-built components, this isn't simply a like-for-like replacement. The new parts are different, according to the men behind the wheel, and the learning process has to begin all over again.

Drivers have already told me that the differences are huge and they are having to relearn the set-ups of even the most competitive cars from 2015. The data carry over is very little and the pressure is on to unlock the secrets ahead of anyone else.

Take the order that we roughly had in 2015, rip it up and start again – that is the message that is coming across from those in the know.

The new parts aren't mandatory. Indeed, when the parts upgrades were announced towards the end of 2015, series bosses were adamant about this point. Teams who hit out that they couldn't afford the new bits were told that it wasn't a problem, because the older-spec parts would still be eligible. If they couldn't afford them, then no bother: stick with the older kit.

That is fine, I suppose, but if any racer wants to be right at the cutting edge of the competition, then they need the latest equipment. That is just logic.

The only team that will be missing out on the early miles is Team BMR with its Subaru Levorg models. There are very few days off being allowed to members of the Hertfordshire crew. It is a good job that the team is underpinned by some of the finest technical minds in the paddock and has two of the category's most successful drivers.

Given the clean sheet of paper in terms of set-up that most drivers are describing so far, they will have a battle on their hands to get up to speed.

All this means that the BTCC could be in for one of its most competitive shootouts for quite some seasons in 2016.

AGREE/DISAGREE?
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RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

Somerfield is back
Ginetta GT4 Supercup driver Reece Somerfield will complete a fifth season in the category this year, again racing as a privateer. The 27-year-old took one victory in the series in 2015 and is now targeting a top three points finish. "Last season we had some strong results and just scratched the surface of what we can do, there's no doubt that in 2016, I will be looking for consistent podiums and aiming to finish inside the championship top three," he said.

Oliphant's brother
The younger brother of reigning Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion Tom Oliphant will make his racing debut this year. Jack, 20, will compete in the Ginetta Racing Drivers Club series, joining his father Paul in the category. "It's been fantastic following my dad and brother, and the GRDC really is the easiest and best way for a beginner to be a part of a big, competitive grid full of like-minded people," he said.

Festival canned
Plans for the touring car festival at Donington Park in July, as reported in *Motorsport News* in October last season, have been shelved, although organisers are working on ideas to create a similar tin-top themed event in the future.

Benbow's the man
Engineer Dave Benbow will be working with Jack Goff at WSR for this season's British Touring Car Championship campaign, not Simon Cumberpatch, as reported in *Motorsport News* last week. We apologise for the error.

Photos: Oliver Read

MALVERN AND JONES JOIN BRITISH GT WITH CAYMAN

Single-seater star gets GT4 chance



Simpson team will run new Cayman



Malvern (left) and Jones

By Rob Ladbrook

Multiple British single-seater champion Scott Malvern will join the British GT Championship this season sharing a new Porsche Cayman GT4 Clubsport with co-driver Nick Jones.

Malvern, 26 from Barkingside in Essex, will race one of the Stuttgart firm's new machines for the Simpson Motorsport team, which is also making its British GT debut having run in Britcar and the 24H Series previously.

Malvern has racked up titles in British Formula Ford, Formula Renault and the Walter Hayes Trophy. He and Jones have shared a Radical SR3 in recent seasons.

Simpson is the second team to confirm one of the new Cayman GT4s, alongside Lanan Racing. Malvern and Jones tested Aston Martin and Ginetta machinery before settling on the Porsche.

"It's been my aim to get into GT racing for a few years and this is a great opportunity," said Malvern.

"GT4 and GT3 are now global products, you can race them anywhere under the same set of rules so it opens a lot of career opportunities. British GT is the best national GT championship in the world and is something people look to because it has international-quality teams and drivers.

"Adapting to GT4 hasn't been that tough. The cars are actually quite similar to a Formula Ford in the way they move around on track as GT4 has no aero so you rely purely on mechanical grip. Obviously the pitch

and roll is exaggerated with the extra weight, but the theory is the same.

"Nick suits GT4 well and our times have been good in testing. We're going in looking for race wins."

Simpson is expected to take delivery of the Cayman in late March, leaving limited time for testing.

"We get the car late but we have experienced people around us to make it work," said Jones. "Simpson have a good background in endurance racing and a professional set up. I'm confident Scott and I can be competitive this year."

Australian Formula 4 racer Goddard heading to Europe as Double R MSA assault beckons

Australian Zane Goddard will race in MSA Formula this year with Double R Racing. The 16-year-old made his car racing debut in the Australian Formula 4 series last season, finishing ninth in the points. He will now join compatriot Luis Leeds in making the move to competing in the UK. "I feel extremely privileged to compete overseas this year

in MSA Formula with Double R," he said. "It will be a great opportunity and certainly a big challenge to race against top quality drivers from all corners of the globe. I can't wait to get across to Britain, meet my team and get into my car for the first time and acclimatise myself with my new surroundings." Double R team boss Anthony Hieatt added: "Zane is a decent

pedaller. He knows the Mygale cars and the tyres so hopefully he will be running at the front." Hieatt said German driver Carrie Schreiner will also race for the team at selected rounds. "She'll be doing about four events, the ones that don't clash with the German series [ADAC Formel 4]," he said. "The plan is to run two full-time drivers this year and Carrie at some rounds."



Double R has two cars filled

Indian racer Reddy for BRDC F4 with Fortec

Fortec Motorsports has signed Indian racer Tarun Reddy for this year's BRDC Formula 4 Championship. Reddy, 18, competed in the MSA Formula Championship last year with Double R Racing, finishing 15th in the points and taking a maiden podium finish at Croft. Reddy is the second driver confirmed at Fortec, joining

Faisal al Zubair. The team still has a third car available. Reddy said: "I had a few tests with Fortec late last year, which went very well. The goal for this season is to develop the car and my driving style so that we can fight for podiums and race wins." Fortec's Russell Dixon added: "Tarun has shown rapid progress in the car so far."

Photo: David Young Photographics



Harrison will step up to top Mini class


Mini Challenge Cooper champion Harrison seals Coastal Racing Gen3 F56 class switch

Reigning Mini Challenge Cooper champion Nathan Harrison will graduate into the series' Gen3 F56 class this year in a two-car entry from Coastal Racing. Former British karting title winner Harrison lifted the championship's Cooper Class crown with 11 race wins last season to register his maiden car racing title during his first full year on long circuits.

The 19-year-old from Oxford will now move up to race one of the 255bhp Gen3 F56 cars alongside multiple Cooper champion Shane Stoney. Harrison had chances to switch to racing in America, but chose to further his tin-top experience in the UK first. "This year is a big season as there are a lot of things in the pipeline for 2017 if it goes well,"


said Harrison. "The Gen3s are different to the Coopers. You have twice the power, a sequential gearbox and much sharper brakes. You have to be more precise with the car to get the most out of it. "Although Coastal Racing hasn't run Gen3s before I know we can figure the cars out quickly. Having Shane as a team-mate is good because we'll work together

on the set-up and two Cooper champions stepping up to the top class shows the championship structure is working. "I want to be in the top three this year, regularly fighting for wins and podiums. It'll be tough as some drivers will be going into their second year with the Gen3s, but I want to keep the momentum of winning a championship going."



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*'The forests will
echo with revs'*
Historic Rally preview, p11



Brit Gill is going for glory

Gill returns to Euro Renault with MBM

Alex Gill will return to the Formula Renault Northern European Cup this year with Mark Burdett Motorsport.

Briton Gill, 18, finished eighth overall in the championship last season when running with Fortec Motorsports. Team head Mark Burdett said: "We've watched Alex's progress since karting and he's one of Britain's best young racers."

"He's done a few tests with us and has fitted in straight away. It's great for the team to have a driver of his quality."

Gill, a former Super One Cadet and British KF3 karting champion, added: "I feel like this will be a strong season."



Zelos will move into Clios

Zelos moves to Clios with Ciceley

Ginetta Junior frontrunner Dan Zelos will graduate into the Renault UK Clio Cup with British Touring Car Championship squad Ciceley Racing this year.

The 17-year-old has spent two seasons in Ginettas with JHR Developments, finishing fourth in the points on both occasions.

He will now handle one of the 200bhp hatchbacks as part of Ciceley's two-car expansion into the Clio Cup this year. The team has also signed Ollie Pidgley.

"I loved the Clio straight away when I tested it," said Zelos. "It's like a mini touring car and is very smooth and easy to drive. It's got more power than I'm used to and I've got to get used to front-wheel drive and slick tyres."

"It was a tough decision to leave JHR but it's always beneficial to see how other teams work and Ciceley are very professional too. It was a chance that was too good to turn down."

DEMPSEY TO RUN AMERICAN



CDR cars have Mazda livery

Cliff Dempsey Racing has completed its two-car line-up for this year's BRSCC National Formula Ford 1600 Championship by signing Team USA Scholarship candidate Chase Owen.

The Irish squad will field two works-supported Ray GR13/14 chassis in both this year's National Championship and James Beckett's Super Series contest. Owen, 23 from Houston, Texas, joins Formula Ford Festival winner James Raven in the line-up.

Dempsey will also run both cars in the colours of the Mazda Road to Indy Shootout, which will award drivers from both FF1600 classes a spot on the

shootout to win a fully-funded season in the US F2000 Championship worth £140,000.

Owen has previous single-seater experience having been a winner in the Skip Barber Academy series in the USA. He made it to the final shootout for a spot on the Team USA Scholarship last year, but lost out to fellow Skip Barber graduate Dakota Dickerson.

Dempsey said: "It's very exciting to have Chase join us as American drivers have a good history of success in British Formula Ford. The deal came about because [Team USA Scholarship advisor] Jeremy Shaw put Chase in contact with us. He's

a big FF1600 advocate and believes American drivers should do at least a season in Europe for their development.

"European racing is much tougher and a higher standard than it is in the junior US classes. Chase will have to adapt to the car, the tighter track, and the more physical style of racing. He's got bags of potential though and having James [Raven] alongside him will be great as James is superb at helping to bring on other drivers via feedback and advice. A year in the UK is great – just look at the career path of [British F1 runner-up now IndyCar racer] Josef Newgarden."

Mazda man Tuck moves to Caterham

Mazda MX-5 frontrunner Ben Tuck will graduate into Caterham Racing this year after signing up for the British marque's Supersport Championship.

Tuck, who landed the prize of MSA Young Driver of the Year for the 2015 season, will move out of Mk1 MX-5s to campaign one of the 140bhp Sevens for the PT Sportscars team.

The 18-year-old from Bedfordshire scored two race wins in the BRSCC's MX-5 Championship last year, finishing third in the standings during his first full season of racing.

"The Caterham is a big step up but it's great fun," said Tuck. "I only did four

Tuck is ready for second full year of racing



Tuck has tested his new Supersport machine ahead of year

races in 2014 and last year was my maiden season so to finish third was a great result.

"The Caterham chance came about through my driver coach Kieren Clark, who put me in contact with PT Sportscars and it went from there.

"The driving style is very different. The MX-5 was a lot heavier and

under-powered so you always set it up to understeer, whereas you drive the Caterham sideways to really get the best from it. You steer it on the throttle to keep your apex speed up and it's very controllable on the limit.

"I want to be in the top five in most races and be fighting for podiums this year. Top three in the championship points is the goal."

GROUP NATIONAL EDITOR

ROB LADBROOK

"British series need to stop clashing dates"



This is always an exciting week to be working on *Motorsport News*. It's the week we receive the first draft of the National Racing Calendar for the 2016 season.

For those not familiar with the calendar, it details each and every race meeting happening in the UK and Ireland this year, along with each round for the 209 individual racing series operating.

There are a colossal 201 race meetings this season, so no doubt we'll be able to bring you plenty of content to enjoy over the coming season.

But the calendar also raises a few concerns. There is such a thing as too much choice, and with 201 meetings taking place largely between March and November, there are inevitably going to be clashes, but a few just seem down right silly.

Within my role at *MN*, I cover the British GT Championship and the FIA World Endurance Championship. Being a sportscar fan, it's a dream, but this year could be a bit of a nightmare.

Let's look at the weekend of April 16/17. The WEC roars into life at Silverstone, precisely the same weekend as British GT begins at Brands Hatch. That's Britain's best sportscar class starting in Kent, and the world's best one starting in Northamptonshire. For a fan – or a journalist – that's a pain as we have to choose one or the other, as do the drivers involved in both series.

Aside from just sportscars, you will also find the British Touring Car Championship holds its second round at Donington Park on that date too.

Don't fancy top-flight sportscar racing? Well the Endurance Racing Series is on at Rockingham too to make it three endurance races within a few miles of each other!

Or fancy something more classic? Head to Castle Combe for the 50th Anniversary meeting of the Historic Sports Car Club!

This must be a joke, surely? But it's not.

That gives us four major meetings and an interesting 'clubby' – none too far removed from each other geographically – on the same date.

That's plain stupid scheduling.

Crowds will inevitably suffer for each event as fans are forced to choose, and it makes it near impossible for an individual to keep up with everything that's going on across those two days.

Surely somebody in a position of power should be standing up and demanding a rethink?

I understand the pressure on championship organisers to find suitable dates, and the pressure on venues to accommodate them. But a bit more coordination to avoid clashes – between the British championships we control especially – would surely work better for everybody involved.



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HISTORICS

'HSCC will provide a Race Retro highlight'
'Speed Street' display, below



TRIBUTES TO DAVID STOKES

STEVE PEREZ Fellow BHRC champion

"Sad news and there is a big hole in rallying now. Historic rallying will not be the same without him around. David was a hell of a driver and it was a privilege to compete against him. God bless you mate, it's been a ball!"

RAY CUNNINGHAM Irish Mini ace

"This is indeed a really sad time for historic rallying and rallying in general, a true legend has gone on to join so many others well before his time. David you will be sadly missed."

NEIL SHANKS Leading co-driver

"It's been a pleasure to compete against a legend in our sport; a gentleman and always smiling."

JASON PRITCHARD Reigning BHRC champion

"I remember watching a rally when I was younger and David was also spectating that day and between the runs David felt he had to feed myself and my father. I've never left a rally so full in all my life. He was a gentleman, a character and always there to help you. He will be missed on and off the stages and was always up at the front until the very end."

PATRICK WALSH Former BHRC champion co-driver

"I only really got to know David when competing against him in the BHRC a few years back, and always found him approachable, helpful, with a great sense of humour and usually a slightly mischievous grin on his face. A true stalwart of historic rallying in the UK, David was the yardstick for many in the series."

MARK FALVEY Leading Irish historic driver

"I was very sad to hear this news. I only competed twice against David and it was the best fun I ever had competing; the jokes and messing was fierce."

JAMES WHITAKER Leading co-driver

"Today one of the fiercest competitors I've ever met passed away. An excellent champion of rallying throughout his life but, most importantly, one of the truest gentlemen you could ever meet."

CHRIS RIXON Former co-driver

"So I have spent the last few years co-driving for somebody who spent every rally wanting to get to the same level as David Stokes. He was the level to which everybody aspired, the Loeb of historic. To say he will be missed will be the understatement of the year."

FRANK CUNNINGHAM Irish historic driver

"I feel like we all have lost a best friend. No disrespect to anybody else but he was the nicest man I ever met in motorsport."

Photos: Paul Lawrence

TRIBUTES FOR DAVID STOKES

Outpouring after historic rallying favourite dies



By Paul Lawrence

Tributes from across rallying have flooded in following the death of David Stokes last week after a year-long battle with cancer.

Stokes, 68, was the most successful driver in the MSA British Historic Rally Championship with four titles in 2007, 2010, 2011 and 2014, all in BDA-powered Ford Escort Mk1s.

When the news of his death was announced on social media, it sparked an unprecedented level of sympathy from drivers,

co-drivers, mechanics, organisers, marshals and fans. The common threads were his sense of humour, passion for the sport and determination to succeed.

Stokes barely missed a round of the BHRC in 12 full seasons and was challenging for a fifth title in 2015 when he had to withdraw from the Harry Flatters Rally in July with one stage to go. He was too exhausted to carry on that day and the full extent of the cancer was diagnosed shortly afterwards.

In an exclusive interview for

MN in 2012, Stokes talked about the second part of his career in historic. "After the accident in Penmachno, I was 33 and decided that my rallying was over. But in 2002 I decided to wind back from the business. I still took *Motoring News* and Jimmy McRae was doing historic and I fancied a go at it. I enjoy it more this time around."

MN extends sincere sympathies to his wife Sue, rallying brother Andy and the rest of the family, co-driver Guy Weaver and David's countless friends in rallying.



Stokes: a popular man

OBITUARY

David Stokes 1947-2016

David Stokes was one of eight brothers and sisters from Wootton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire.

In 1968, on his honeymoon with Sue, he watched Roger Clark on the Scottish Rally and was inspired.

He started with a Ford Anglia and soon moved into Escorts as he climbed the UK rallying ladder.

He won the 1976 Castrol/*Autosport* national title and finished third in both 1978 and 1979 behind Malcolm Wilson and Jimmy McRae.

However, a big accident in Penmachno early in 1980 left him quite badly hurt and he effectively stopped rallying for 20 years.

The comeback finally came in 2002 in historic with his beloved Escort Mk1.



Stokes' 1970 Ford Anglia



Stokes and Weaver's Mk1 in '10

Weaver gelled with champion Stokes from their first rally

Guy Weaver did more than 100 rallies with David Stokes and became a close friend as well as co-driver.

"David was a driver filled with enthusiasm and he really lived life for rallying. I first sat with David on the Robin Hood Stages in 2006 in snow and ice. The rally

was on maps and I had never even been in a car with David. This was a baptism of fire, but it showed what a class driver he was in handling the conditions.

"He was never short of confidence in pushing on where needed and we both used to really enjoy the longer

rallies with a recce. This is where the teamwork and chemistry between us gelled. "I always felt comfortable sitting with David even when we got through two 'shells' in three events in 2008. His comment was that he didn't used to get through that many 'shells' in the 1970s."

Toivonen to honour family aces

Harri Toivonen will celebrate the careers of his father Pauli and brother Henri by driving one of the course cars on the AvD-Histo-Monte, which starts in Mainz in Germany tomorrow (Thursday).

Toivonen will drive an Opel Kadett E GSi to mark the fact that Pauli won the Monte Carlo Rally 50 years and Henri won it

30 years ago. The four-day, 1000-mile regularity event will tackle famous Monte Carlo stages including the Col de Turini.

"It is a huge honour for me to drive on those famous roads down to Monte Carlo 50 years after my father's and 30 years after my brother's victory," said Harri Toivonen.



Toivonen will drive Opel Kadett

Stanley Mann dies after fall

Leading Bentley restorer and racer Stanley Mann died recently at the age of 70 after a workshop fall.

Mann acquired his first Bentley in 1970 and later formed the Stanley Mann Racing Team to enter Bentleys in a wide range of motor sport events. In 1990 he was a founder member of

the Benjafield's Racing Club and was one of the leading characters in the vintage Bentley fraternity.

He took part in a range of record-breaking adventures in Bentleys and was a renowned restorer at his workshops in Hertfordshire.

His son Oliver will continue to run the business.

IN BRIEF

Stars for Boucles

Bruno Thiry (Datsun Violet), Freddy Loix (Opel Ascona), Citroen boss Yves Matton (Porsche 911), Stephane Lefebvre (Citroen Visa), Bernard Munster (Porsche 911) and Gregoire de Mevius (Nissan 240RS) are among the star names for this weekend's Legend Boucles in Belgium. For the first time, the event features a second day dedicated to gravel stages.

Jones' Red Kite bid

A year after being forced out of the rally with gearbox problems, Daniel 'Lwni' Jones and Kevin Lewis will return to this weekend's Red Kite Stages in their Ford Escort Mk2. Last year, in snow and ice, Jones led the event early on during his BHRC debut and will now head back to Llandovery chasing a top six overall finish.

Juniors on tour

For the second weekend in a row, Greg Thornton (Lotus 20/22) and Richard Smeeton (Wainer) shared the victories in the Formula Junior Diamond Jubilee World Tour. At Killarney in South Africa, Smeeton raced his shark-nosed Wainer in front of former owner Marco Antonucci. Jac Nelleman took both front-engined class wins.

Historic debuts

Barry Stevenson-Wheeler and John Pickavance will make their historic rallying debut on Sunday's Red Kite Stages, the opening BHRC round of the season. Stevenson-Wheeler has competed extensively in his Open Category Ford Escort Mk2 and finished fourth in last year's R.A.C. Championship. He has now switched to a full historic-specification Ford Escort Mk2.

Race Retro display

The HSCC will mount an eight-car display in 'Speed Street' at Race Retro (February 26-28). Cars on show will include the ex-Rupert Keegan Chevron B34 F3, the F2 March 752 of Phil Hall, Daryl Taylor's Lola T390 from the Pre-'80 Endurance series and Richard Dutton's Ford Lotus Cortina.

Pearcey in Belgium

Yorkshireman Tim Pearcey will return to Belgium this weekend for a second assault on the Legend Boucles in his Ford Escort Mk2. Pearcey will have the experienced Louis Louka as co-driver and hopes to improve on 19th overall from the 2015 event. The gravel stages on Sunday should particularly suit Pearcey.

Austin-Healey show

A rare 1953 Austin Healey 100/4 that raced in the inaugural New Zealand Grand Prix in January 1954 will go on public show for the first time at Race Retro (February 26-28). Chassis number 145426 was one of three works cars that were sent to New Zealand and only returned to the UK in 2014. It is expected to race in Europe this season.



Austin-Healey to go on show

'Bogie swaps Ford for Skoda in BRC'
Scott returns with CA1, p16

Photos: Paul Lawrence, Chicane Media



Mintex MSA British Historic Rally Championship preview. By **Paul Lawrence**

CAN THE BHRC DELIVER ANOTHER DOUBLE CHAMPION?



Pritchard is after a second title

On Sunday, the forests of Crychan in Wales will echo to the sound of hard-revving classic engines like the BDG as the 2016 Mintex MSA British Historic Rally Championship gets underway with another fantastic entry for the Red Kite Stages.

Heading into the championship's 17th season, Jason Pritchard and Phil Clarke will bid to become the first back-to-back BHRC champions since the late David Stokes and Guy Weaver did the double in 2010 and 2011. There is every reason for them to be pre-season favourites.

The Pritchard/Clarke and Ford Escort Mk2 combo has no real weaknesses; both crew members are at the top of their game and are just as strong on asphalt as they are on gravel, with Pritchard being particularly at home on the daunting lanes of the Isle of Man. Their only slip of 2015 came a week after they had settled the title in Douglas when they gently inverted the Escort in Yorkshire.

For sheer pace on gravel, however, Nick Elliott and Dave Price take a lot of beating. With the best six scores from nine rounds to count, Elliott could win the title with a perfect season on gravel but that is a big ask even for someone as quick and committed as the Cheltenham Ford Escort Mk2 flyer. They will miss the Harry Flatters due to other commitments and may need to consider an Isle of Man debut if the title is still in reach by September.

The real darkhorse is the newly-prepared Fiat 131 of Matthew Robinson and Sam Collis, the latest edition to emerge from Rallysport

Development in Malton. Robinson's Escort pace on gravel in recent seasons has been sensational and his progress with the Fiat will be a major early-season talking point. Whatever happens, there will be a lot of laughs and some epic takeaways along the way for this pair.

So who can challenge the big three? Well, we've not yet seen the best of Joe Price and Chris Brooks since they switched to historics and they surely have the pace to win on gravel in their Ford Escort Mk2, while the similar car of Terry Brown and Den Golding – rallying's fastest pensioners – are a match for most of the young upstarts.

Other crews poised to join the big league this season are Rudi Lancaster/George Gwynn, Steve Bennett/Iain Tullie and Simon Webster/Jez Rogers. All three are Escort-mounted and showed ever-increasing pace last year despite a lack of seat time and, in the case of Lancaster, a very long break from the sport.

Two Pinto-powered Escorts from Northern Ireland will be right in the mix against the more powerful BD-engined cars. Paul Barrett/Dai

Roberts (Mk2) and Stanley Orr/Guy Weaver (Mk1) have prodigious pace and the fact that Barrett has been seeded as sixth historic on the road this weekend shows just how strongly that pace is rated. Both crews will certainly set class benchmarks.

In Category 2, for the pre-1975 cars, defending champions John Perrott and Keaton Williams should pick up where they left off last year in their Escort Mk1 and can count Warren Philliskirk/Nigel Hutchinson (Mk1) and Simon Tysoe/Paul Morris (Mk1) as key rivals along with Orr/Weaver.

Sadly, the revised running order arrangements have decimated Category 1 for the pre-1968 cars and just five will start on Sunday. Father and son Bob and Dale Gibbons (Ford Cortina Mk2 GT) and the evergreen Bob Bean and Malcolm Smithson (Lotus Cortina Mk1) will set the pace. Bean will be two weeks short of his 78th birthday when he starts another season of rallying.

Several significant cars have the potential to feature prominently. Alongside Robinson's Fiat 131 is the Hillman Avenger of his mate Barry Jordan, the first such car to run in

the BHRC with BRM power. It's a fascinating package that could spring some surprises. Add in the rapid Sunbeam Lotus of Guy Anderson/Steven Davey and Gary Cooper/Jon Riley along with the fresh Triumph TR7 V8 of David Kynaston, it makes a fantastic entry.

In the classes, Irishmen Barrett (D3) and Orr (C3) will be hard to beat, but chasing Barrett will be Ben Friend/Cliffy Simmons in their Pinto-powered Escort Mk2. Friend is undoubtedly the rising young star of the BHRC. From the 1600cc ranks, Chris Skill and Tom Jordan (Mk2) will be the standard in Category 3, while Adam Milner and Roy Jarvis head the 1600cc Category 2 cars in a Mk1. Milner, who will make his Welsh debut, was a star of last year's Trackrod despite minimal previous experience on four wheels. His pace away from Yorkshire will be watched with great interest.

With close to 70 historics, it has the potential to be another great BHRC season. The smart money this weekend will be on Pritchard and Elliott, but there plenty of others in the hunt. ■

THE ROUNDS

1 Red Kite Stages, Sunday February 21

Classic Welsh forest stages in the Crychan area with the added possibility of snow and ice. Based in Llandovery.

2 Rally North Wales, Saturday April 2

A welcome return to the outstanding stages in the Dyfi and Garthiniog forest complexes. Based in Dolgellau.

3 Pirelli Carlisle Rally, Saturday April 30

A trip north to Kielder with the promise of four long stages in the main block of the infamous forest. Based in Carlisle.

4 Severn Valley Stages, Saturday June 4

Back to Wales for more classic stages and the possibility of tyre-eating hot and dry road conditions. Based in Builth Wells.

5 Harry Flatters Rally, Sunday July 31

The first asphalt event of the season with a charge over the daunting military roads of Epynt. Based in Brecon.

6 Red Dragon Stages, Saturday August 20

A new event on the BHRC schedule, taking in some of the finest gravel stages of all in South Wales. Based in Walters Arena.

7/8 Isle of Man Classic, Thursday-Saturday September 15-17

An epic event on the closed public roads of the island and an absolute highlight of the rallying calendar. Based in Douglas.

9 Trackrod Historic Cup, Friday/Saturday September 30/October 1

The season finale is back on the gravel of the famous Yorkshire forests of Dalby and Langdale. Based in Pickering.



Robinson is an interesting proposition in 131



Perrott is defending Category 2 champion

RALLY NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

BREEN:

'I'VE NEVER BEEN SO AT HOME'

Irishman happy with first outing in DS 3 WRC



Breen and Martin scored eighth overall

By David Evans

Craig Breen believes he's never felt so at home in a rally car after his World Rally Championship return, driving a works-specification Citroën DS 3 WRC for the first time.

The Irishman, co-driven by Scott Martin, finished Rally Sweden eighth overall, having posted a third fastest time on his first outing in a factory-spec WRC car.

The pre-event uncertainty of whether the event would be running or not did little to calm Breen's nerves, but once the rally was underway, he quickly felt comfortable in a car he'd only tested for 50 miles before the start.

"It's a great, great car and a real rally car – the team knows everything about this car and how to get the best out of it."

"I haven't been able to get this kind of confidence from a car in a long, long time. It feels so comfortable, so safe and I know there's so much potential in me; I'm only at 70, 80 or 90 per cent



Irishman debuted well

with it at the moment."

Breen ran the car more conservatively on the first day, but he was soon stiffening it up and looking for ways to push harder on his first outing in a WRC car in Sweden for two years.

"I ran the car a little bit softer on the first day," he said. "Thast was just to give me some confidence in it. But that came quickly on Friday, so immediately I was trying to stiffen it up to make it a bit quicker."

Breen admitted he'd surprised himself with his pace on what was only his third start in Sweden.

He added: "We had a fastest split

time and a third fastest time: that's so much more than I expected. I was thinking I'd be coming down in seconds from these guys, from three to two to one second per kilometre off these guys, so to be looking at coming from 0.9s to 0.8s to 0.7s and to be on the pace is way beyond what I expected."

The Waterford driver's performance drew praise on multiple fronts, including reigning WRC champion and event winner Sebastien Ogier.

"To be in the points, to be top eight is definitely a good result for Craig on his first drive [with the team]," said Ogier. "To be there, he has made no mistakes, that in itself is a very good result on this rally."

Breen's Northern Irish team-mate Kris Meeke also praised his fellow Emerald Islander, saying: "He's done a bloody good job here. When I first came here, I was fighting with Henning [Solberg] and that's where he's been. He's done well, especially his times on the second pass on the Norway stages."

Citroën team principal Yves

Matton said Breen's performance bodes well for the rest of the season.

"He did a good job," said Matton.

"The average speed from the weekend is at the level I expected if he is doing a good rally. He was showing some very interesting splits and stage times. He did some small mistakes, but each driver made some small mistakes on this difficult rally. For his first rally in the DS 3, for me it's a good job and I am happy. He is really committed to what he does and he is very professional. It's really positive for the rest of the season."

The Abu Dhabi Total team will skip the next two rounds of the World Rally Championship, so the next potential outing for Breen will be Portugal in May.

Matton added: "I'm not keeping the programme a secret. I will announce our next events, maybe, two at a time rather than our whole season. If I did that and wanted to change something, it makes it difficult. But, we said we wouldn't be looking to compete outside Europe, except for maybe in China."

CRAIG BREEN'S RALLY SWEDEN: STAGE-BY-STAGE

SS2 Torsby 1 (10.24 miles) 9m11.3s (+18.3s to fastest)

9th fastest; 9th overall

Breen: "It's so fast in there, it's quite hard to get my head around that for the first time in a World Rally Car."

SS3 Rojden 1 (11.47 miles) 10m07.2s (+34.9s)

10th fastest; 10th overall

"I absolutely loved it. Just a fantastic stage."

SS4 Svullrya 1 (15.05 miles) 13m10.4s; (+22.5s)

8th fastest; 9th overall

"I'm still learning the car, it still feels a little bit alien at times. But I feel like everything is back on track after the last two years."

SS7 Svullrya 2 (15.05 miles) 12m50.6s (+6.4s)

3rd fastest; 8th overall

"How do you explain that? I'm a bit lost for words. It was just fantastic. It feels incredible to be in that car."

SS8 Rojden 2 (11.47 miles) 10m10.1s (+17.3s)

9th fastest; 8th overall

"We had an overshoot in there. I got a bit greedy under braking and dropped about 15 seconds – I was trying to remember how to get reverse!"

SS9 Torsby 2 (10.24 miles) 9m19.8s (+22.0s)

11th fastest; 8th overall

"We had a slow puncture on the right-rear and that caused a spin in a slow corner, it was no trouble."

SS10 Fredriksberg (11.30 miles) 10m06.1s (+22.7s)

9th fastest; 8th overall

"The conditions are quite different today and it's taking me a little time to get used to driving the car with a bit more snow around."

SS12 Vargasen 2 (15.34 miles) 13m23.4s (+26.7s)

6th fastest; 8th overall

"Incredible. Coming through there, I wanted to give it the yee-ha! It felt like I was playing the PlayStation. Amazing."

SS 14 Rammen (14.14 miles) 11m21.4s (+18.2s)

8th fastest; 8th overall

"The car didn't feel quite so good at the right-rear, maybe we lost some studs?"

SS16 Vargasen 2 (15.34 miles) 13m04.6s (+15.8s)

7th fastest; 8th overall

"Bit of inexperience of this event and these conditions showing there – I was a bit too hard on the tyres and lost some of the studs. Honestly, I thought I'd lose more time."

SS17 Karlstad (1.18 miles) 1m40.6s (+5.7s)

20th fastest; 8th overall

"I wasn't going to take any risks in there. It was such a tricky stage with a very soft surface."

SS21 Varmullsasen (9.86 miles) 8m06.5s (+23.8s)

11th fastest; 8th overall

"The aim was to be at the finish and I've made that. I'm really, really happy with what I've done here."



Waterford man flew on tricky Rally Sweden

BOGIE JOINS AHLIN AND LAFFEY AT CA1 SPORT FOR BRC

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The Strength of Experience



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'Ellis wins at wet Goodwood'
South Downs report, p27



Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Olsson: Sweden CEO

SWEDEN SAVED IN U-TURN DEAL

A new three-year agreement with WRC Promoter delivered a complete turn around for Rally Sweden – which was on the edge of dropping off the WRC billing just seven days ago.

Warm weather looked like it would force the organisers to cancel the rally for only the second time in its history – a move which would have cost the organisers £1.55m and wiped the event from the calendar.

A cold front arrived just in time to save the Karlstad-based event and a week of hard work from the organisers was rewarded with a calendar slot until 2019.

"A week ago, this event was more dead than alive," said Rally Sweden boss Glen Olsson. "I couldn't see any future for the event. Now we have managed to put on an amazing event and it is an incredible feeling to be able to confirm we have agreed on a new three-year deal.

"What we had to find was an economic deal which both us and WRC Promoter could live with. We needed to find a ladder so we didn't walk right into a wall with money, we have done that with a development every year paying more and more. This is a level we can survive on; it's going to be a challenge, but we can live with this. The promoter likes us, they want us on the calendar."

Full of praise for the job Olsson and his colleagues have done, the WRC teams, however, are keen to see the event moving north in Sweden.

Citroën's Yves Matton (pictured right) said: "For sure

it was the right decision to run this year and the organisers did a good job to make that happen. But in the future, I'm not sure: each year we come here with a question mark about will it be possible [to run] or not? I don't think the conditions will go in a good way in the future."

His opposite number at Hyundai Michel Nandan added: "The organisers had a very hard job, it was by luck the weather was in favour and we could run. If it did not go cold, it's not possible and we have to cancel the event. The organisers did a fantastic job, but to gamble like this – it's not really the right way to do the rally."

"There can always be a change in the weather, we understand that, but I think in the future we need to be 90 per cent sure that stages can run whatever the weather on our winter rally. This has to be the minimum."

Rally winner Sebastien Ogier agreed. The Volkswagen driver said: "Sweden has a big history in rallying, it's an iconic event, but for sure we want the place where we have the best conditions. Unfortunately with global warming it's getting more difficult, we see this every year. I think the time has come to go north."

WRC Promoter's Oliver Ciesla, who concluded the three-year agreement with Olsson, told MN:

"We are not happy with the weather lottery, but we are happy with all the rest. The



Sweden lives to fight again

championship loves a winter rally and it loves Norway and Sweden. From the promoters' point of view, this rally has a good market, great media and television and a strong commercial side."

Despite the new deal with Sweden, Ciesla said he would still continue talking to other winter rallies.

"I am looking at other possibilities to run as a second winter rally, including possibilities in Canada, Russia

and Japan," added Ciesla.

Olsson wouldn't be drawn on any potential future home for the event. He said: "It's too early to talk about that."

"We need to have a dialogue with the FIA and the promoter on how we handle the future, we still have big demands for a snow-safe event and we have big financial demands."

Remaining in Karlstad with more Norwegian stages at a higher altitude is one of the possibility. The other is to move a long, long way up country.

TIMELINE

Friday February 5

The weather starts to turn with cold weather departing and temperatures warming.

Saturday February 6

Six degrees and pouring rain falls on the stages, melting the snow and ice away.

Sunday February 7

WRC Promoter and FIA in contact to discuss cancelling the event.

Monday February 8

Following a conference call between the stakeholders, the decision is to run a revised itinerary.

Tuesday February 9

The start of the recce is postponed by a day.

Wednesday February 10

Recce starts in plus temperatures and wet and muddy conditions. Decision is to leave everything as it is and watch the weather.

Thursday February 11

Drivers meet with teams and feel the event can't run. The decision taken by



all stakeholders is to continue, knowing they have four good ice stages on Friday. The organisers water the opening Torsby stage overnight.

Friday February 12

Temperatures fall to around -5 and Sweden's northernmost stage, Torsby, runs with solid ice base. Snow starts to fall as the rally crosses into Norway.

Saturday February 13

Stable freezing conditions continue, but snow eases – Vargasen 2 and Rammen are run, superspecial is muddy, but runs. Sunday's Lesjöfors stage is cancelled.

Sunday February 14

Single powerstage runs without any problems. Three-year deal revealed.

GLEN OLSSON Rally Sweden CEO

Q&A

How has this week been for you?

"It's been a dramatic week. A week ago, last Sunday, I almost didn't want to get out of bed in the morning. The weather was so warm and my gut feeling on Saturday and Sunday was that this just wasn't going to go the right way. There was nothing in the forecast to give us any hope – there was nothing promising."

When did that change?

"Around 1030hrs on Sunday before the rally, we got the first forecast which looked OK. We checked around, looked more and by Sunday night, we were pretty sure we have to find a way. During that night the route manager found a way to do the route with the roads that we had available."

Can you believe the change in the weather?

"It was pretty hard to understand the difference one week can make; when we had the cold coming and then on the Sunday we even had some sunshine in Sweden. The

situation was totally different then."

You started by moving the recce, was that a tough decision?

"We had to do it. The cold was coming Thursday. We knew Wednesday would be tough, but we also knew we could fix the roads afterwards and we knew when the cold came that would make the roads OK."

As long as the cold came, you were confident?

"Yes. I was quite certain, if we get the cold weather again then I knew the roads would freeze in 24 hours. We had so much water in the roads, they were rock-hard in a day. That was the result. We actually had less road damage on this year's event than we had last year."

What would it have cost you to cancel?

"It would have been a 2m euro loss. The company would have gone down, I don't see how it could have continued. It's been a real saga."

GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

DAVID EVANS

"Meeke would have drop-kicked me into the harbour"



Had I followed the advice of my high-ranking FIA friend, Kris Meeke would have drop-kicked me into the harbour. No doubt.

Meeke and his co-driver Paul Nagle had just arrived in Karlstad at the end of the second and final day of the recce. KM was absolutely fizzing. He got out of the car, threw his arms into his jacket and yanked his hat down onto his head.

In a flurry of obscenities, he left me in no doubt what he thought of the conditions and the chances of the event running.

Turns out I'd be home in time for a Six Nations weekend after all.

Had I, at that point, asked whether the roads were really unsafe, things would have gotten ugly and quickly.

If I'd ventured the point that it was his choice to put his right foot on the throttle not the brake, thereby making him the arbiter of his own speed and safe passage between the trees, it's possible he would have thrown his recce car at me.

Now, with a bit of distance between us, I'll make that point; if it's not safe, slow down.

I know, I know, it's easy for me to blithely sit behind this laptop in the comfort of a warm press office (actually, it's quite chilly in here at the moment...) talking calmly about what drivers should and shouldn't do in the white heat of competition. But it's true. Was it truly dangerous in the end? Personally, I don't think so. The primary concern was icy ruts and no studs. In the end, we had neither.

I absolutely don't question the drivers' ability to identify genuine danger. But, for me, that was averted by the event organiser's regrading and watering of the stages (admittedly, doing this post-recce's not ideal, but they really had no choice) and by WRC safety delegate Michele Mouton, who drove stages non-stop to identify what would work and what wouldn't. If she wasn't convinced, there was no half-measure, it was canned.

I can, at least partly, understand the drivers' frustration: the perfect winter conditions provide a unique driving experience and last week was a very, very long way from perfect.

And maybe that was the problem. These boys are ferociously competitive animals and Meeke and world champion Sebastien Ogier are the most competitive of the most competitive. Anything which hinders their ability to demonstrate that edge, can't be tolerated.

But rallying's about the sub-optimal. It's about adaptability, evolution and dealing with what's in front of you. It's about facing down the fastest, iciest forest roads on studded tyres.

If it's not. If it's only about optimal conditions and level playing field, then let's get rid of the man on the right and call it racing.

I understand the drivers' desire to have a voice, for their opinion to be heard.

But the weather – and the prevalence of studs left in tyres – showed last week to be the wrong battle.



AGREE/DISAGREE?
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RALLY NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

Henning Solberg planning WRC return

Henning Solberg is aiming to be back in the World Rally Championship in time for Rally Argentina – but he wants a current specification Ford Fiesta RS WRC.

The Norwegian returned to the WRC on last week's Rally Sweden for the first time since the first two rounds of last year's championship. He is, however, determined to stay for 2016.

"It's fantastic to be back," he said after finishing seventh on the Karlstad event. "I am talking with sponsors now, but for sure I want to be back – not for Mexico but for Argentina and then after as well. But it has to be the '15 car for me. It's really important I'm in the same car as the other guys."

M-Sport's Malcolm Wilson said: "It's always good to have Henning around, he's a real character and he's certainly shown that he's still well capable of driving for a result here. Because of car availability, it might be tricky to get him in a 2016 car for Argentina, but we'll see what we can do."



Frenchman went off in Sweden

Tight deadline for M-Sport and Camilli

M-Sport faces a race against the clock to get Eric Camilli's Ford Fiesta RS WRC prepared in time for next month's Rally Mexico.

The Frenchman crashed out of Rally Sweden last week causing significant damage to the bodyshell. The car was trailed back to Britain early and had arrived back in Cumbria before the end of the weekend. It is due to be airfreighted to Mexico for the event from March 3-6 a little over a week from now.

"There's a lot of work to do," admitted M-Sport boss Malcolm Wilson. "The car is a bit of a mess, it was a pretty violent accident, but I'm sure we'll get it sorted in time. We have to."

On the subject of his new driver's second shunt in as many rallies, Wilson said: "We've got to give him time. There's absolutely no question of putting pressure on him. This has hurt him, he wants to get it right. It's easy to forget just how little experience he's got – this is only his 13th round of the world championship. The plan is for him to finish Rally Mexico, but everything is new for him."

LATVALA'S POLO WOE UNSOLVABLE

Without parts VW can't identify Finn's Sweden driveshaft issue



Latvala is well behind in title fight

By David Evans

Volkswagen will not be able to identify the issue which cost Jari-Matti Latvala his chance to fight for victory on last week's Rally Sweden.

The front-left driveshaft on the Finn's works Polo broke just over a mile from the end of the opening stage. After struggling through Friday in rear-wheel drive he was forced out with suspension failure. His worst start to the season compares starkly with teammate Sebastien Ogier, who sits at the top

of the table with a perfect 56 points: two rally wins, two powerstage bests.

To compound the Finn's misery, the absence of broken parts means VW can't determine what went wrong for Latvala.

The German squad's team principal Jost Capito said: "We felt very bad, they had a technical failure on the car. This was something we didn't have happen before. We don't know what it was or why it happened and now, because the parts are all gone, we will never know. The connection for the driveshaft broke and the parts came off. We will check the

materials of the others to have a look and see if we can find anything, but we are confident it won't happen again."

On Latvala's tough start to the year, Capito added: "We felt really sad for him. He did not have a good start in Monte Carlo and then here it has been bad for him as well. The good thing is that he came back with good speed and now he's in a good position on the road and looking forward to Mexico. For sure he will challenge for victory there."

Latvala admitted his place on the road in Guanajuato was the only positive to

come from the weekend in Sweden.

"The only chance I have is with the road position," he said. "I need to keep cool now, I need to concentrate on my job and trust the speed that I have. I think this will be enough. On this rally I think I would have been able to challenge Seb."

Latvala admitted the fact that he didn't make a mistake helped him cope psychologically: "It does make it easier to know that I haven't done anything wrong. There was nothing I could have done; the car broke and the car was always going to break."

Hyundai plan radiator changes after Neuville troubles

Hyundai will make changes to its i20 WRC in the next fortnight in an effort to avoid another transmission failure similar to the one which ruled Thierry Neuville out of last week's Rally Sweden.

Neuville dropped six minutes on day one when the rear differential seized on his new-for-2016 i20, forcing the car into front-wheel drive only.

"We had no cooling on the differential," said Neuville, "so it cooked itself and then it exploded. It must have all melted inside, the noise was bad and I could feel it trying to lock, it was slowing down the wheels and then it went bang."

The problem was caused by an oil leak in the differential cooling radiator.

Hyundai team head Michel Nandan

explained: "We had a leak on the fitting for the diff cooler. The oil came out and there was no more oil in the diff, so everything seized. This problem was 100 per cent our fault. This was one part which, provisionally, was going to be changed for Mexico after a test – that's the plan now. We have a new radiator coming and we will change the route for the pipes."

After a promising podium on the season opener in Monte Carlo, Neuville heads to Mexico 41 points down on series leader Sebastien Ogier.

"Of course it's disappointing," Neuville said. "We would have been in second place, but that's the game. I can't say anything about Mexico, I can't do more than my job. I do that and I hope for the best."



Ahead of Rally Sweden, Eyvind Brynildsen said he didn't want to come second. He didn't. He was fifth in WRC2, but won Colin's Crest – setting a new record jump of 45 metres.

McKINSTRY PICKS UP THE SILVERWARE AT KIRKISTOWN

PAGE 27



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RALLY NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Jakob Ebrey, Writtle Photographic

BOGIE SCORES SKODA FOR BRC

Scot chooses new Fabia for a full title attack



Skoda wanted Bogie in BRC

Bogie's 2011 car (left) and new Skoda (r)

Wilkinson: Bogie has the pace to compete

CA1 Sport team boss Martin Wilkinson believes that David Bogie has the pace to compete at the front of the British Rally Championship this year because the Scot is the last BRC champion in a four-wheel-drive car.

Bogie came out on top after a difficult season in 2011 where he beat Jonny Greer, Marty McCormack and the title favourite for 2016, Elfyn Evans.

Wilkinson said: "Bogie saw off a lot of strong competitors that year including Elfyn Evans. Anybody who could do that even at that time, is pretty fierce. I know Elfyn has a vast amount of experience since then but I definitely believe that David has the pace to challenge for the title."

Bogie tasked Wilkinson with sourcing the Skoda Fabia for this year, despite the machine being rare in the UK.

"I was asked by David to secure him a drive in a Skoda and that's what I did. If he hadn't have wanted the Skoda it could have been a very different story."

"If that had been the case, then we probably wouldn't be running David. It was through my contacts that I was able to get a Skoda."



Wilkinson (r) backs Bogie

By Jack Benyon

Former BRC champion David Bogie will join Martin Wilkinson's CA1 Sport outfit to pilot a Skoda Fabia R5 in the British Rally Championship.

Bogie's car choice has been subject of rumour since his Ford Fiesta R5 – purchased in 2014 – was put up for sale at the end of last year.

The 2011 BRC champion will move to the Czech Republic marque for a full championship campaign. "It's been a long time coming to be honest, since we first met with Skoda in October," explained Bogie, 28.

"I've known Martin at CA1 a long time and through his

connections and how we promoted ourselves to Skoda it did manage to push us up the queue for the car. Skoda Motorsport is keen to have a car in the BRC going for rally wins so it's certainly in its interests as well. It realised I had a Fiesta and, if it couldn't offer me a good package then that's where I would be staying.

"So Skoda made us an offer that was reasonable and it stuck by its word and came good with the car for the first rounds of the championship."

Bogie will rally the car for the first time on the Red Kite Stages on February 21, and believes that despite the competency of the Pro-Tec team, which had looked after

his cars previously, the time was right for a change.

"I had a good relationship with Pro-Tec before, with five Scottish titles and a British," added Bogie. "I can't fault Pro-Tec at all, but Martin Wilkinson assisted me with getting the Skoda and, moving forward the decision was made and I'm looking forward to working with him. He has a lot of experience."

With his plans shrouded in secrecy, Bogie has gone under the radar when onlookers have been picking out title favourites for this year's BRC, but the Scot says that's just how he likes it.

"Back in 2011, myself and [co-driver] Kevin [Rae] were

underdogs going into the championship and nobody was talking about us and we managed to win the first round and it went from there," said Bogie. "I always like to go in as the underdog. I never put myself under pressure."

The change of car comes as interest in the Ford Fiesta R5 has picked up, mainly thanks to Elfyn Evans's back-to-back WRC2 wins with the new R5 Evo upgrade in Monte Carlo and Sweden recently. The tweaks improve the power band of the M-Sport-built machine. However, Bogie has seen enough to believe that the Skoda Fabia is the way forward.

"My car required an engine

upgrade, so rather than doing the upgrade it made sense to me to go and get the Skoda," said the Dumfries driver.

Bogie said that with very limited testing in the new car, he's expecting a learning experience over the opening rounds of the season before he gets fully up to speed.

"I'm sure the Skoda Fabia will be competitive and that's what we need," said Bogie. "All I do need to do is get into the hot seat, get testing, get the set-up right and then feel comfortable in the car."

"Unfortunately that might take one gravel round and one Tarmac round, but I'm hoping to be able to adapt as quickly as possible."

ST driver Simpson all set to compete on four rounds of the British Rally Championship

Tony Simpson will compete on selected British Rally Championship rounds in 2016 having secured backing to enter his Ford Fiesta ST.

The Liverpoolian has previously competed in Nissan Micras, MG ZRs and VW Polos, but has rallied STs exclusively since 2011.

Now the 41-year-old will tackle the full BRC for the first time, thanks to the Rallyme

initiative, an online fundraising scheme, and his sponsor Flying Dog.

"We've got the budget to do four rounds this year," explained Simpson. "It's the ST we had last year, we'll be eligible for BRC 4 so there are a couple of people registered. We can go and push, especially in Mid Wales where I did well on Rally GB. "We can't wait to go back.

I've never done the full international BRC, only the challenge section. Doing the full BRC is still a bit of a childhood dream for me even after how long I've been rallying. When you see entry lists like the 1997 Manx you can only say 'wow'."

Simpson presented coverage of the British Rallycross Championship last year, but with no deal confirmed to

continue this year, there are still question marks over his full plans. "The opening round of the rallycross series is on the same weekend as the BRC in Wales," said Simpson. "If the opportunity for TV comes up I would have to drop Mid Wales but we'd do the Scottish instead. As it stands our programme will be the Mid Wales, Pirelli, Nicky Grist and the Manx."



Simpson was the N3 class champion in the BTRDA in 2015

THE MAN BEHIND THE TEAM: MARTIN WILKINSON AND CA1 SPORT

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'Drama as Francis wins on last stage'
Cambrian Rally report, p24

Photos: Whittle Photographic, Ger Leahy



SCOTTISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP PREVIEW

MacCrone did Scottish event in R5 in 2013

SCOTTISH SERIES TO BOUNCE BACK

Scottish Rally Championship bosses are predicting one of the most open seasons for years with R5-mounted rising stars John MacCrone and Garry Pearson taking on series stalwarts Jock Armstrong, the reigning champion, and Mike Faulkner.

Experienced co-driver Neil Shanks, a member of the SRC management committee, believes the series is on the way up after a difficult 2015 when two rounds were axed due to low entries.

"You would say going into the season it's going to be the most open any contest has been for a number of years," said Shanks. "Jock has to be the favourite being the defending champion and having the experience. He was certainly quick last year."

"You would expect John MacCrone and Garry [Pearson] to be challenging when they get used to their cars and get some miles in. And you've also got Mike Faulkner who's always right up there. Shaun Sinclair in the S9 Subaru is going to be another one to watch, he was quick in whatever he drove last

year and he's not chopping and changing cars this year."

MacCrone and Pearson both feature in Ford Fiesta R5s, with MacCrone joined by experienced navigator Rhianon Gelsomino and Pearson partnered by Robbie Mitchell.

The SRC finished early last year after losing the Merrick Stages and Colin McRae Forest Stages due to poor entry numbers. But the series could be boosted by the return of the BRC, according to Shanks.

"It's good that you have Garry and John there," he added. "The Scottish championship is a good place for people looking to move on in the future, and it's great we're going to have a strong BRC as that's really going to benefit the regional championships because it gives people something to aspire too."

The Inverness-based Snowman Rally opens the Scottish championship on Saturday and runs with a capacity entry with five all-gravel stages scheduled over a competitive distance of 44 miles.

ENTRY LIST

Arnold Clark Jurys Inn Snowman Rally top 10

DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
1 Jock Armstrong/Paula Swinscoe	Subaru Impreza
2 Mike Faulkner/Peter Foy	Mitsubishi Lancer E9
3 John MacCrone/Rhianon Gelsomino	Ford Fiesta R5
4 Donnie MacDonald/Andrew Falconer	TBA
5 Shaun Sinclair/Stephen O'Hanlon	Impreza WRC S9
6 Bruce McCombie/Michael Coutts	Mitsubishi Lancer
7 Barry Groundwater/Neil Shanks	Mitsubishi Lancer E10
8 Andrew Gallacher/Jane Nicol	Ford AG Fiesta
9 Mark McCulloch/Michael Hendry	Mitsubishi Lancer E9
10 Garry Pearson/Robbie Mitchell	Ford Fiesta R5



Reigning champ Armstrong is favourite

Testing woe puts Kershaw out

Reigning BTRDA Silver Star champion Boyd Kershaw and co-driver Bryan Hull missed the season-opening Cambrian Rally after a gearbox broke in pre-event testing.

Kershaw was testing the Escort he used to win the title last year at Walters Arena, but the failure left him unable to get the parts and rebuild the car in time.

The New Zealander has purchased another Escort for this year's BTRDA, but that also couldn't be readied for the Cambrian.

Hull said: "We were waiting parts for the new car, which has a Vauxhall engine rather than a Ford, including suspension bits," said Hull. "The plan is to get both cars ready for the Malcolm Wilson Rally."



No Cambrian for Boyd



Murphy's Fabia has striking livery for 2016 ITTC assault Murphy picks up ex-Loix Skoda S2000

Owen Murphy will contest multiple Irish Tarmac rounds plus a selection of British championship events in his ex-Freddy Loix Skoda Fabia ahead of a full domestic title attack next season.

The Irishman will give his Evo 3 Fabia its first event start on the West Cork Rally from March 12-13 after he skipped the Galway International earlier this month to secure his new-for-2016 machine.

Murphy, a two-time winner of the Irish Forestry championship in a Mitsubishi Lancer E9, feels that he'll be competitive straight away in

the Czech Super 2000 machine.

"I believe that we can be on the pace from the word go – that's why I have chosen West Cork to start with. It's a rally I am always competitive on."

"I have never driven with a sequential gearbox and I haven't driven a naturally aspirated four-wheel-drive car before, but I'm confident I will pick it up."

He added: "Hopefully next year we will be able to commit to doing the full Irish Tarmac Rally Championship in its entirety and, if budget allows, also take part on some rounds in the British championship."

Brackley to Versailles and Llandudno for Blacks

Steve and Callum Black's dash to France ahead of the Cambrian Rally last weekend went unrewarded when they retired after the first stage.

They travelled to Citroen Racing's base in Versailles to pick up a new gearbox just two days before the Cambrian Rally got underway last Saturday.

The father and son duo had fitted a new gearbox to their Citroen DS3 R3 Max earlier in the week, but Callum identified that the unit was faulty. With no other option, the Blacks set off for Versailles last Thursday but made it to Llandudno in time for the rally start.

"Around 1600hrs on Thursday we ran the car down the road and I knew something was wrong," said Black Jr. "I was straight on the phone to Citroen and we set off at 2100hrs from Brackley."

The blacks reached Versailles at 0500hrs on Friday and were back in Brackley for 1500hrs before heading to the rally. However, an off into a bank on SS1 bent the rear beam and put them out.



The Blacks retired after one stage

REVELLING IN HISTORIC RALLYING

PAUL LAWRENCE

"Rest in peace David Stokes"



Stokes scored an unprecedented four titles

I last saw David Stokes on a wet and windy Epynt last July. He opened the window of his truck and offered a suitably rude greeting, which included berating me for missing the previous round of the BHRC while on holiday.

Later that day, I was at Bamford's for the penultimate stage of the rally and David's familiar Escort Mk1 cruised into view at a much reduced pace. Broken gearbox and limping to service, I thought. However, the truth was that David was physically spent and did not have the strength to tackle the final stage. It was the first time I fully realised how poorly he was, for David was not a quitter.

I go a long way back with rallying's fastest baker. In the early 1970s when I was a lad growing up around motorsport in Gloucestershire, he was the local hero taking on, and beating, the best in national rallying.

But it was not until 30 years later that I really got to know David during more than a dozen years of the British Historic Rally Championship. I watched him on more than 100 rallies and probably saw 'AFW 66K' on 300 stages from Wales to the Isle of Man, Belgium, Kielder and Ulster. Stood stage-side in Flanders with the camera one year, I got the finger and a big grin as he oversteered out of a square left.

His death last week after a battle with cancer closed a rallying story that covered more than 40 years and leaves a very big hole in the historic rallying fraternity. No one has been a stronger advocate for this branch of the sport than David and no one has yet come close to matching the four BHRC titles he earned in the second chapter of his rallying career.

He was one of those larger than life characters with a sharp wit and some deadly one-liners. But he was also a fierce competitor and, into his pensionable years, could still put it across most of his younger rivals. He'd help anyone who needed it, but if he could get a competitive advantage over his rivals, he would. He had a strong opinion on most things and his skills as a wind-up merchant were legendary.

When the split in historic rallying came in 2013 we were on opposite sides of the great divide. But I'm pleased to report that things moved on and I was soon once more seeking him out in service areas for a typically pithy quote, often unprintable.

I spoke to David just before Christmas and he was still eager to share the historic rallying gossip, even though his health was failing. He promised to call in the New Year so that we could do a story confirming his retirement from the sport. Sadly, his condition quickly deteriorated and time overtook us.

Rest in peace David.

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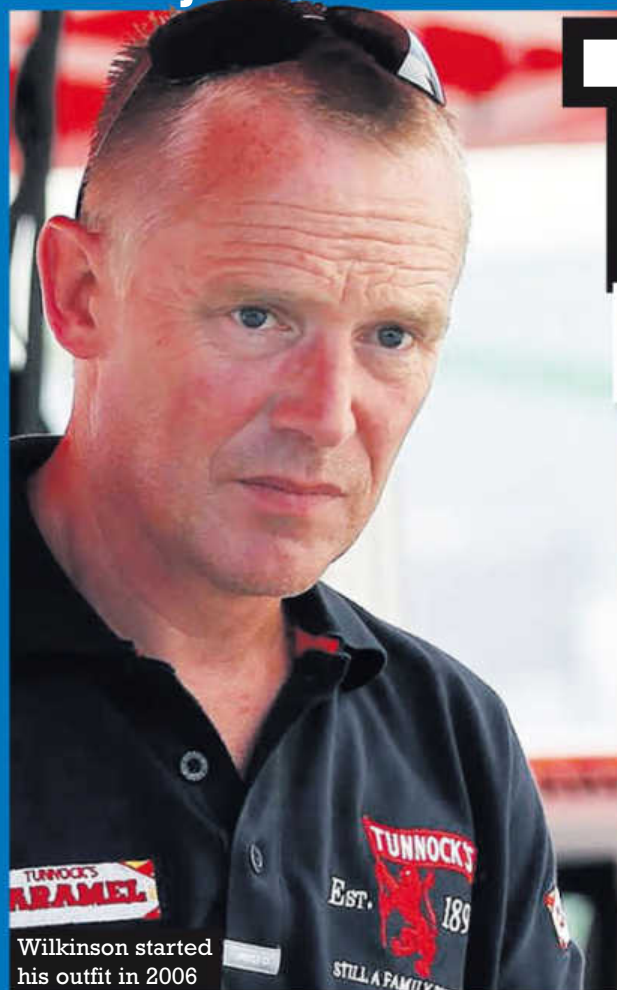
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INSIGHT: CA1 SPORT

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

The story behind Martin Wilkinson and CA1 Sport. By **Jack Benyon**



Wilkinson started his outfit in 2006

THE BRC'S LATEST POWERHOUSE?



McRae needed Wilkinson's help after Corsica crash



Grist says CA1 chief made the impossible possible

Not many national rally operations can boast a man who managed a car for one of the most legendary names in the sport for a number of years, but CA1 Sport certainly has that nailed down.

The Cumbrian outfit was started by Martin Wilkinson, who at one stage was responsible – engineering and everything in between – for Colin McRae at his time with M-Sport.

The rallying bug bit early in Wilkinson's case. A nearby family friend was Gavin Waugh, notorious in 1970s rally circles for being one of the first fully-sponsored drivers in the sport backed by White Horse Scotch Whisky in Chrysler and Hillman Avengers. It wasn't long before Wilkinson was immersed in the sport he loved. After a brief spell campaigning Ford Escort Mk2s, Wilkinson moved to the mechanical side of the sport with the famous Mike Little Preparations outfit. It was here that Wilkinson first came across M-Sport boss Malcolm Wilson.

"After I'd served my time as a mechanic I got offered a full time job at Mike Little Preparations," says Wilkinson. "We did the world championship with various people including Mohammed Bin Sulayem, Stig Blomqvist and many good drivers of that era."

"I was rallying myself at that time in a Mk2. I bought a lot of parts for that car from Malcolm Wilson Motorsport, which had a shop next door to where we were based. Malcolm offered me a job on lots of occasions but I didn't bother as it was pretty much the same as I was doing where I was anyway."

By 1996, Malcolm Wilson Motorsport was a serious player in the World Rally Championship and results like Jarmo Kytölehto's 1000 Lakes Rally podium in that

season were enough to convince Ford to give the WRC contract to a soon-to-be re-named M-Sport.

"When Malcolm got the Ford contract at the end of 1996 he asked me again to go and work for him as he had a very small team at the time," adds Wilkinson. "When I started there were a dozen of us, when I left in 2006 there were over 300 people working there."

By 1999, McRae was on M-Sport's books along with Carlos Sainz, and the nature of Wilkinson's relations with the Scot's Focus WRC were intimate.

Wilkinson says: "I was in control of everything on Colin's car, whether it was engineering, parts, whatever. We were overseeing everything at the time."

It's not only the cars Wilkinson has looked after. He was quickly on the scene to help save the Scot's life when he was trapped in the Focus after crashing out of the 2000 Tour de Corse event.

One man who remembers the period well is Nicky Grist, McRae's co-driver. According to the Welshman, what Wilkinson couldn't fix wasn't fixable.

"Martin was a very important part in our success," explains Grist. "If we came back with a car that needed a lot of TLC, you could guarantee that Martin and the guys we had around us would do the business, more often than not we would leave service with a car we could drive. He was a bit of a miracle-worker."

"The job he did was very important but, when our backs were against the wall, it was his planning and thinking that he would make the impossible, possible. He could turn his hand to the car and come up with something to pull us out of the situation we were in."

By 2006, Wilkinson had decided enough was enough and that he'd been there and done it all. It was time for a new challenge and to set up

his own team with a gap in the market in his mind.

"When I started CA1 Sport there were only a few teams doing the world championship. There weren't really any bigger teams like there had been before. When I started doing the job at the end of the 1980s there was RED, Mike Taylor Developments, Mike Little Preparations, Gordon Spooner Engineering, Malcolm Wilson Motorsport. There were a vast amount of big teams [in the UK] who all had big contracts and were doing the world championship, but that tailed off over time."

"I could see there weren't that many UK teams doing things properly in the world or European championships in 2006. I thought if we can do a good job, we could go and get some good customers and do an international championship. With the knowledge I had and the mechanics I knew – I've worked for most of the manufacturer teams at one point or another – I thought there was scope for it. When I started CA1 sport that was the intention: to run people properly with the full package."

And provide a package it has. CA1 has had success with Ott Tanak, Robert Barrable and most recently Fredrik Ahlin, who will form part of this year's BRC attack.

Despite running relatively successfully in WRC2, Wilkinson believes that the new-look BRC is somewhere he wants to place his focus. "I'm passionate about having a British championship," he says. "It needs to be a place where people from all over the world will look at, certainly as a stepping stone into the WRC if not even a step into a factory drive. It's died off over the past few years and it's been terrible for British rallying."

CA1 Sport has put together a crack squad this year, starting with 2011 BRC champion David Bogie, who has

been confirmed for the BRC in a Skoda Fabia R5 (see *Rally News*).

The second CA1 driver, who is also expected to run at the front of the series, is Fredrik Ahlin, a young Swede who has shown a lot of pace but hasn't quite delivered the results.

"For Fredrik, there are a lot of people don't know him," says Wilkinson. "His times are fantastic. Most people have heard of Jari Ketomaa and if you look at the times he was doing two years ago in Sweden, Fredrik was matching and beating his times. He has the raw pace."

Wilkinson does admit that Ahlin will struggle through lack of experience on asphalt – and it isn't Bogie's favourite surface either – but the third driver in the team is Alex Laffey, multiple MSA Asphalt Junior champion.

The direction of the CA1 squad will always favour young drivers thanks to Wilkinson's ethos of favouring junior talent.

"I did the world championship for over 20 years," adds Wilkinson. "I've seen the transition from it being manic with things like chase cars, helicopters and 10 to 12 service vehicles to it now being a single-point service area where the cars get one service a day."

"I've seen the whole spectrum. From Group B, through Group A

and into WRC cars, I have a lot of experience there."

"I like working with younger drivers and bring them on. As a direction for the company, I don't have any aspirations to definitely go and do the whole WRC again or the whole European championship."

"I'm happy to do a championship with a young driver where I can watch him improve through that time. If that means a full programme in the world championship then fantastic, that's great for us. That's not the point though: I'm enjoying helping the guys and doing the job properly."

Talking about doing the job properly, Wilkinson has put his faith in the BRC this year by running three cars in the series, but he believes end result will be worth it.

"I'm looking forward to the BRC this year," concludes Wilkinson. "Probably more so than we have done any year before the world championship."

Can CA1 Sport deliver the first BRC champion of the new era?

That's a question we'll only have an answer for at the end of the 2016 BRC season on the Isle of Man, but if the answer is no, it won't be for a lack of talent and management from the small outfit on the edge of the Lake District. ■



Fredrik Ahlin is Wilkinson's latest attempt to help young drivers

RALLY SWEDEN



BY DAVID EVANS

Volkswagen star tops them all again – despite weather dramas

Descending through the cloud cover going towards Stockholm, reality bites. It's like rain on your wedding day.

It's green, not white. Not even a bit white. For 24 hours, counsel had been courted. Overwhelming feeling? Stay at home. It won't happen.

It's the good advice that you just didn't take.

In the days before Rally Sweden, half-empty glasses of Chardonnay littered Karlstad bars. Black flies abound. Ironic.

Everything was ironic. Pirelli's announcement of an all-new Sottozero ice tyre, just as the last frozen fragment of central Sweden melted. Karlstad's own symbol is a smiling sun, reflecting its statistical standing as one of the country's sunniest places. The word 'Varmland' on the doors of every rally car; Varmland is the region this festival of supposed snow and ice runs in. The translation's not complicated. Warmland. Spring sprung just as the World Rally Championship arrived for its winter round.

A little too ironic.

The organisers had worried for a week. Eight nights before the WRC landed, this part of Scandinavia had been in the grip of a deep, deep freeze. Minus 30 and snowfall measured in feet not inches had answered their annual prayers. A day later, it warmed up. Then it warmed up again. It wouldn't stop getting warmer.

The snow slipped away, taking with it the perfect, pure white canvas on which this year's production was supposed to be painted. Sweden became Wales; white woods turned deep, evergreen forests.

The roads? They turned to mud and mush. The first of many rally week meetings slashed eight stages from the itinerary, but the organisers came under real pressure to knock the thing on its head. The drivers splashed their way through the recce to warn of what they felt was a very real and present safety implication.

And when they felt they weren't being listened to, the drivers and co-drivers assembled themselves in a chilly multi-storey car park in the centre of Karlstad at 0600hrs last Friday.

The plan was simple: skip the first stage, go straight to the next one. All agreed? All agreed. What's that Hayden Paddon? You're going into the first stage. Er...

Ready for the real irony. Forced to concede the Thursday night spectator pleaser around Karlstad's trotting track, the organisers were determined to keep some element of winter in the opening ceremony. Somebody was sent out to source truckloads of snow for the snowmobile display.

It worked: the snowmobiles flew.



Kiwi Paddon was a star of the event

Twelve hours later, it was wall-to-wall snow. Winter came back.

The stage most of the manufacturer drivers were determined to skip, Torsby, provided a solid ice base after countless volunteers pulled an all-nighter to provide their heroes with a stage suitable for them to perform on.

Struggling to stand on inch-deep ice at the end of the 10-miler, the wind picked up and a blizzard blew in. Sweden aped Siberia.

Ironically, we had a rally on.

There was nothing predictable about last week. Actually, that's not quite true is it?

For 12 years now, predictability in the World Rally Championship has come via one word: Sebastien. Predictably, a French Seb was the master of what, for a while, looked to be a total disaster.

Well watered, winter was left to work on Torsby. The result? A solid ice island between grassy banks. The lack of snow opened the drivers' eyes to just how fast this rally could be. For the first time in years, they could see into ditches, slide wide in confidence, knowing for sure there was no stone waiting for them. Burying anything beneath a snowbank is impossible without snow...

Fastest by three tenths of a second from his team-mate Andreas Mikkelsen, Ogier was on a mission as he headed for the border and his team-mate's backyard.

It's no exaggeration to say Norway was something of a saviour for Rally Sweden this year. Running at a higher latitude, not to mention four times the altitude. Admittedly, 450 metres is nothing compared with the French Alps of round one or the 2,500-metre plus Sierras awaiting us in Guanajuato next month, but it was better than being 100 metres above Swedish sea level.

Between them Rojden and Svullrya provided 53 miles of good ice and solid winter. Ahead of the rally, these were the only two stages Ogier said the organisers should run. A short, sprint event was his recommendation on the eve of the start.

From the moment the recce was put back a day, clerk of the course Stig Rune Kjærnsli was making it up as he went along. As Khalid Al-Qassimi's co-driver Chris Patterson put it: "You wouldn't want to play poker with this man."

Kjærnsli and rally CEO Glen Olsson put everything on the line to a backdrop of disharmony and disquiet. They gambled on the weather, faced down the dissenters and narrowly avoided financial oblivion while creating a brilliant rally on the hoof.

Having turned Torsby around and enjoyed Norway, a weekend on more southerly stages in Sweden came into view. Continued snow completed the winter white scene and created a captivating Saturday.

Ogier was never headed through day one, but he was riding his luck. He rattled the Polo into the trees, aquaplaning off the road in a high-speed right-hander in Svullrya.

Having ploughed plenty of snow and won last year's event, he was more than man enough for the task this time around.

A close battle for second was headed by Hayden Paddon, seven places further back on the road.

"He will have a big advantage if it keeps on snowing," warned Ogier as the cars arrived back in Karlstad at the end of a cross-border day.



Ogier won despite an early accident

"I need all the help I can get," countered the Kiwi, running a New Generation i20 for the first time.

A stage win on the day-closing return to Torsby had helped build Paddon's confidence. Seeing more snow falling into the night would help even more.

Even if snow expert and third-placed man Mads Ostberg might have spoiled all the fun.

"We have seen how much it hurts to be first on the road if it snows on the Swedish," said the chirpy Norwegian. "And, for sure, Ogier will find it hard tomorrow, but it's not as bad as if the snow had been falling on ice – then he would *really* struggle; the snow slips on the ice below. Tomorrow, the ground beneath the snow won't be frozen – the snow will insulate it – and he will be able to dig down and get some grip from the gravel."

There you have it. Mads' guide to the sort of snow that slips on ice as opposed to insulating snow.

Into Saturday.

Only the Vargasen stage was run

twice on day two (this, undoubtedly, had plenty to do with the mass of corporate hospitality centred on Colin's Crest). Return trips to Fredriksberg and Rammen were canned in fear of the astronomical bills to put right what would be deeply ploughed public roads.

Fredriksberg was first up. Ogier pushed. Following his leader into the finish, Mikkelsen laughed at the marks he'd left.

"He is everywhere," said Mikkelsen. "He is going so quick, so hard. The lines are going to the ditch, everything. He's pushing like hell..."

Five quicker than Paddon, Ogier's lead was up to 32.4s.

This was classic Ogier territory. Every now and then the Gap driver takes everything up a level. It's what champions do, they have an extra per cent or two tucked away, deployable only when the going gets a bit tougher.

Last Saturday was that day.

Vargasen was Ogier's nightmare and nemesis. The day's most westerly stage

was full of snow and his Polo would double as a high-speed shovel for the cars following.

Just under four miles in and Paddon was 5.9s up. Next split, at almost 10 miles... 15.7s had been lost the South Islander's way. End of the stage? A total of 23.6s in 15.35 miles. Ogier had shipped a second every 1000 metres. That was almost unheard of.

He was completely calm. He didn't get mardy. Didn't shout or curse the running order. He simply said his piece: admitted he might lose a lot to Paddon, pulled his cans on, flicked the Volkswagen into first and headed to the other side of Hagfors for Rammen.

He then politely ignored much of the service park as it plotted his downfall in the next snow-filled test.

And, the way the white stuff was still falling, it had to be more of the same. Didn't it?

Paddon had heard the same. "It sounds like there's a fair bit of snow in the next one," he said. "I'm looking forward to the next stage – it's one of

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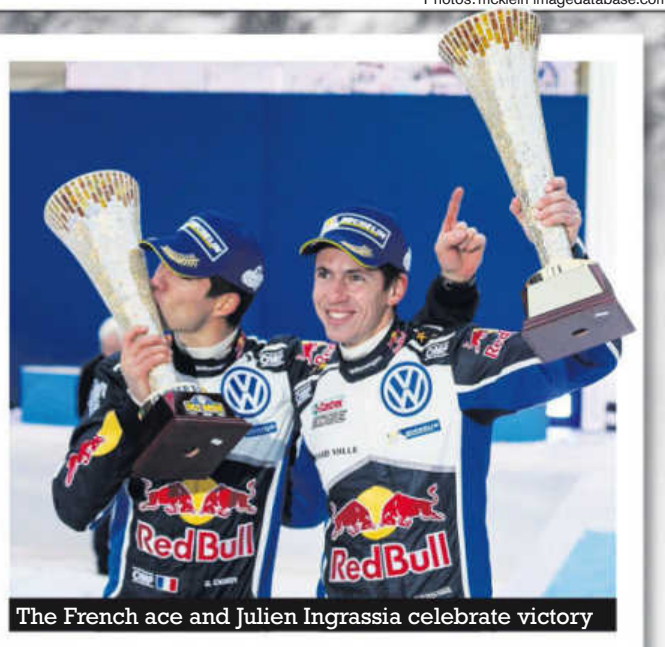
Cont

'I wanted to prove Monte pace was real'
Elfyn Evans flies again, p22



ROUND 02

R NEST



The French ace and Julien Ingrassia celebrate victory



STAGE TIMES

SS1 Torsby (10.24 miles)
Fastest: Ogier 8m 53.0s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Mikkelsen +0.3s

SS2 Rojden 1 (11.47 miles)
Fastest: Ogier 9m 32.3s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Mikkelsen +6.9s

SS3 Svullrya 1 (15.06 miles)
Fastest: Ogier 12m 47.9s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Mikkelsen +24.2s

SS4 Svullrya 2 (15.06 miles)
Fastest: Meeke 12m 44.2s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Meeke +21.0s

SS5 Rojden 2 (11.47 miles)
Fastest: Paddon 9m 52.8s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Paddon +30.9s

SS6 Torsby (10.24 miles)
Fastest: Paddon 8m 56.6s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Paddon +26.9s

SS7 Fredriksberg (11.30 miles)
Fastest: Ogier 9m 43.4s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Paddon +32.4s

SS8 Vargasen 1 (15.35 miles)
Fastest: Latvala 12m 56.7s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Paddon +8.8s

SS9 Rammen (14.14 miles)
Fastest: Latvala 11m 03.2s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Paddon +10.2s

SS10 Vargasen 2 (15.35 miles)
Fastest: Ogier 12m 48.8s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Paddon +15.9s

SS11 Karlstad (1.18 miles)
Fastest: Latvala 1m 34.9s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Paddon +17.1s

SS12 Vermullsasen 2 (9.86 miles)
Fastest: Ogier 7m 42.7s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Paddon +29.8s

COLIN CLARK

"It is baffling that these disputes are allowed to happen"



Rally Sweden turned out to be every bit as exciting and as dramatic as we had hoped it might be. For a good part of last week, however, it most certainly didn't look as if that would be the case.

We had an astonishing situation where the drivers were openly talking about revolt. And what did it all come down to? One word: trust.

All of the histrionics in the days leading up to the event could have been avoided if everyone had put their trust in the Swedish weather service. Let me tell you, on numerous occasions, I've set my watch by the accuracy of the meteorological marvels in Sweden. If they say it's going to snow at 1215, you can bet your co-driver's bonus it will snow at 1215. Sadly, a fair number of our drivers come from countries where the weather forecast would be better believed if it was delivered by Mr Bean.

So making their way through boggy, slippery, squelchy, rut-riven stages on the recce, our boys and girls quite understandably had concerns, primarily about tyre wear and stud retention. Crew safety was their number one concern. It was put to me like this.

"Just imagine you're a world class ski jumper. You turn up to the biggest event of the year and the hill and landing area are completely snow-free. You raise your concerns with the organisers, the promoters and the governing body. The reply you get is: 'Well, we've sold lots of tickets and we have TV commitments! So, be a good boy, don't worry about it, head up to the top of the jump and we'll sort you out with a set of roller blades!'" Succinct, I thought.

As it turned out, the drivers were wrong and the weather forecast was right. By Friday, the stages were in remarkably good condition.

Of maybe more concern is the evident lack of trust between the drivers and the governing body. There are some very big characters with pretty big egos on both sides. If we are to believe what we hear, the trust between all parties has gone, the respect has gone.

Diplomacy is needed here and, with the best will in the world, I struggle to see a diplomat in either camp. Kofi Annan, Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Ban Ki-moon are rather busy right now, so would someone just call Ari Vatanen and ask him to sort out this unseemly mess?

Because it needs someone to step in. What I find astonishing is that when these situations arise, there is a gulf between the two parties. It's a bit like watching a courtroom drama, when defence and prosecution offer equally compelling and utterly believable arguments.

The drivers swear blind it's unsafe and those on the other side, feel the risk is acceptable.

Give the big Finn a call, somebody...

our favourites. We've got this advantage we need to use it." Similar speed in the 14-mile men stage would have Paddon leading with about a 14-second lead over Ogier. Vargasen second time through would offer nothing like the reward as in the morning, but the still favoured the Hyundai man to be a little bit more out of the day. The cancellation of the Lesjofors on Sunday left just a 10-mile stage; everything looked to be going into place for Paddon. With fresh Michelins beneath him, the weapon was sharp as he headed for a very big afternoon. Far off the line into Rammen, he knew the game was up. This wasn't going to be his day. "I knew it wasn't going to work," Paddon sighed later. "There just wasn't anything like the snow in there. And, to be honest, we needed the conditions were never going to beat him on his own."

Continued on page 22



Kris Meeke was fast yet again but hit a hidden rock, which forced him to retire in the Citroen

NOW TURN OVER TO READ MN'S DRIVER RATINGS

RALLY SWEDEN



BY DAVID
EVANS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

RALLY DEBRIEF

Day one: 73.54 miles; 6 stages

Weather: overcast/snowing -8 to -1 celsius

- Sebastien Ogier leads from the start and stays out front in a disjointed day not without problems for the Frenchman. He goes off the road briefly on the morning's final stage but maintains his lead through a snowy afternoon.
 - The rest of Volkswagen's attack is blunted. Jari-Matti Latvala has broken a driveshaft from Torsby, leaving his Polo R WRC in rear-wheel drive – he later retires with suspension trouble. His team-mate Andreas Mikkelsen has spun in SS7 and admits second is the best he can hope for.
 - As on the opening round last month, Kris Meeke is carrying the fight to Ogier. Sadly for the DS3 WRC driver, the Monte Carlo analogy doesn't end there. Another rock, another impact and another retirement from the day. Meeke clips a rock in the line on SS8, breaking the front-right TCA.
 - Hyundai's Dani Sordo arrives at the end of the opening stage with high water temperature; Thierry Neuville has a failed rear differential two stages later. This is looking like a toughies for the new i20 WRCs... until Hayden Paddon steps up.
 - Kiwi Paddon has turned in an exceptional performance – notably quickest through Rojden 2 – to move into an overnight second.
 - Mads Ostberg, Ott Tanak, Sordo and Mikkelsen are all within 15 seconds of the front in a raging battle for the provisional runner-up spot.
- End of day one:** 1 Ogier/Ingrassia 1h03m10.6s; 2 Paddon/Kennard +26.9s; 3 Ostberg/Floene +33.7s; 4 Tanak/Molder +34.8s; 5 Sordo/Marti +38.2s; 6 Mikkelsen/Jaeger +42.0s.

Day two: 57.32 miles; 5 stages

Weather: snowing/overcast -6 to 0 celsius

- Ogier is putting everything on the line to keep his name at the top of the timesheets. The Frenchman comes close to oblivion a couple of times, but keeps the Polo dirty-side-down and on the road with a sensational display of driving.
 - Paddon is still second, despite real potential for a possible maiden win. He's scorched through Vargasen to take 24s out of Ogier, cutting the gap to eight. The leader's wallowing in deep snow at the front of the field, worried for the potential of more of the same in Rammen. The conditions are completely different. Second it is for Paddon.
 - With 25s in hand over third-placed Ostberg, Paddon looks good for second place and it's a similar story for Mads on the bottom step of the provisional podium – the M-Sport driver has eked out 25s of his own from Mikkelsen. The Volkswagen-driving Norwegian briefly ran in third place after second quickest on the morning's opener, but gives best to the Fiesta RS WRC for the rest of the day.
 - Tanak ends a trouble-free day 24s behind Mikkelsen with Sordo the same again behind him. It's an eerily similar set of gaps coming out of a pretty miserable and muddy superspecial at the Karlstad trotting track.
- End of day two:** 1 Ogier/Ingrassia 1h52m04.7s; 2 Paddon/Kennard +17.1s; 3 Ostberg/Floene +42.3s; 4 Mikkelsen/Jaeger +1h07.4s; 5 Tanak/Molder +1m31.6s; 6 Sordo/Marti +1m56.3s

Day three: 9.86 miles; 1 stage

Weather: overcast -6 to -4 celsius

- The crews enjoy a lie-in after the Lesjofors stage is cancelled on Saturday evening. That means just one test on the final day. And that stage – the 9.86-mile Varmullsassen turned into another Ogier masterclass. Astonished at the grip on offer, the rally leader charged through.
- Second-placed Paddon keeps it interesting by knocking down a wooden stake in the middle of one corner. The radiator's damaged, but he keeps his champagne bottle (handed to him on the post-stage podium), empties the bubbles out, fills it with water and pours it into the radiator. Probably the first time that's happened with a half-decent bottle of champers... It works, he makes it home.



Breen scored on his debut for Citroen

Continued from page 21

If it was speed you were after, Ogier was the man. He ripped through Rammen, 1.4s faster than his rival. "I was completely flat out!" said Ogier. "It was fun."

The gap sat at a fraction over 10 seconds. Vargasen again. And Ogier's moment. And it was a big, big, very big one.

On the limiter in top coming towards a toweringly quick right over a small crest, the Julien Ingrassia call was for a feather-like

lift. Ogier did as he was told, but on the way into the corner, the rear of the car became unsettled.

At 120mph, the Polo's left-rear dived into the trees. It took Ogier two handfuls of lock to pull it back. The crew-facing onboard showed a wide-eyed Ingrassia look up briefly from his notes. Ogier blinked, his brain still trying to compute what just happened. Instinctively, neither missed a beat.

"That was a close one," Ogier admitted at the finish, buzzing like a man who has just walked out of a police station carrying a smoking gun. "We were over the limit in that corner. I think I had my lucky star with me today. That moment was almost the end and that's not the place you want to end. It would have been 200kph directly to the trees. I get this problem sometimes on the second loop of stages, the line is a little bit disturbed in the corner and the rear gets loose. I have to say, this one was quite scary. I kept it on the road, but, for sure, there was some luck this time."

That moment made time, another

five seconds. And with just a superspecial (admittedly a muddy and very tricky one at that) in Karlstad and Varmullsassen to come, Ogier was looking good. He doesn't normally drop these.

He didn't. Victory on the powerstage sealed the perfect start to the year.

"It's nice to make the perfect start for the first time in my career," he said. The win, however, had been made on his own super Saturday. "In terms of pure speed, with the conditions I have, that was one of the best of my life," he said. "I never had so many moments in one day of rallying."

Ogier took his extra gear in Sweden last week and nobody could live with him. If there is any consolation for the chasing pack it comes from the fact that an on the limit Ogier was forced to ride his luck. Paddon and his pals have seen that, if they can keep the pressure on, they could force a mistake.

But, for now, the monkey stays on Paddon's back. For now.

Ostberg won his race with

Mikkelsen to be top Norwegian home in third, while Ott Tanak turned in a great drive to fifth, bagging DMACK its best result in the snow.

Dani Sordo was sixth and could potentially have been more of a threat without a puncture. Henning Solberg made a welcome and entertaining return in seventh, one place ahead of Craig Breen, who made eighth on his Citroen debut, upholding the honour of the French firm after an errant rock robbed a second-placed-running Kris Meeke of a shot at the win for the second rally in succession. The Northern Irishman deserved more. His fellow Brit Elfyn Evans got everything he deserved after a second successive WRC2-winning drive in M-Sport's Ford Fiesta R5.

But in terms of that event and this report, there's only one way to end it – with the news that Rally Sweden pulls a three-year deal to remain in the World Rally Championship from the jaws of absolute despair.

You've got it: it's a death row pardon, this time it's not too late.

Thanks Alanis. ■



Transmission woe for Latvala

Evans underlines Monte speed with victory

Winning WRC2 in Monte Carlo was a great start to Elfyn Evans' season. But he was under no illusion. Sweden last week was where the real work started.

The entry list was packed with stars from Skoda and Scandinavia. And one Scandinavian in particular was talking to the talk.

"I'm not here to come second," said Evans' M-Sport team-mate, Norwegian Eyvind Brynildsen. "I did that last year. I didn't come home to finish second again."

Unfortunately for him, his home stages on Friday cost him dearly with a transmission problem leaving him in two-wheel drive. A fifth place finish beckoned.

Fredrik Ahlin pushed Evans hard through day one and was the only driver other than the Welshman to lead the category. Skoda men Pontus Tidemand and Esapekka Lappi were also

at the races, but slipped back when the Norwegian Fabia broke a driveshaft and the Finnish sister car dropped time off the road.

Both recovered, however, to secure the Czech manufacturer a double podium finish.

The BRC-bound Ahlin's hopes of arriving in Mid-Wales on the back of a world championship class win went south with a puncture on Saturday's opener. Fastest on half the Friday stages, despite not settling in as quickly as he would have liked, Evans was 17 seconds up by the end of the day.

"It's been good," he said on Friday night. "I just want to show Monte was no fluke..."

Having shown the speed on day one, he demonstrated the ability to control that advantage on Saturday, while managing a minor steering issue. With Sunday's sole stage to come, he had 17.9s in hand over Tidemand. It was enough.

"I was pretty confident about that," he said. "I have to say, the rhythm wasn't so good on Saturday morning, but I didn't panic – I just got on with it."

Is there anywhere he can't win in the WRC2 championship this year?

"No," replied the man now walking the walk and talking the talk.

Tidemand ended the event 14.7s down in second place, while Lappi took third with fastest time through the final stage.

The Finn was feeling ill for much of the event, as was his rival for the bottom step of the podium, Anders Grondal (Fiesta R5). Brynildsen was fifth with Ole Christian Veiby rounding out the top six in his Skoda.

Sixty-two year-old Michael Fabre took a lonely WRC3 win in his DS3 R3. The Frenchman led from start to finish as the sole starter.

SUPPORTS



Evans saw off allcomers for WRC2 glory

DRIVER ANALYSIS

BY DAVID EVANS



SEBASTIEN OGIER

VOLKSWAGEN MOTORSPORT

Gets 10 for his Vargasen save. Rode his luck and came out smiling after a second 28-pointer in a row. Was big enough to say the organisers were right about the weather too.



JARI-MATTI LATVALA

VOLKSWAGEN MOTORSPORT

Coped masterfully with a rear-wheel-drive Polo R WRC for much of day one. Returned and was there or thereabouts in terms of pace. Goes to Rally Mexico needing a mighty result.



ANDREAS MIKKELSEN

VOLKSWAGEN MOTORSPORT II

Remember last year? Remember the final stage? The hopes, the tears? After coming within an ace of winning here 12 months ago, a couple of day one spins ruled him out of the running this time around.



KRIS MEEKE

ABU DHABI TOTAL WORLD RALLY TEAM

Like Monte, Meeke could have won this event. Took time out of Ogier on the stage before his problem and was five up on the splits when another rock on another line did more damage to the DS 3 WRC.



HENNING SOLBERG

ADAPTA MOTORSPORT

After entering just about every event last year before falling at the final hurdle, it was fantastic to see arguably the slightly more amusing of the Solberg brothers back. Out of the car for a year, no test and seventh. Great.



MADS OSTBERG

M-SPORT WORLD RALLY TEAM

Couldn't find enough grip at the front of the Fiesta on Friday and the times tumbled when he disconnected the front anti-roll bars. Safe and secure in third – a solid effort on his loose surface return to the Ford.



ERIC CAMILLI

M-SPORT WORLD RALLY TEAM

Big shunt for the Frenchman. Coming to these events for the first time, a finish is an absolute must. He knows it, no point dwelling on it – move on to Mexico and put some points on the board in Leon.



OTT TANAK

DMACK WORLD RALLY TEAM

Undoubtedly worried by a potential loss of studs, but actually the tyres worked a treat and so did the Estonian. Couldn't find the final shove to get him into the podium fight, but a top five was a good result.



Dani Sordo flies on Colin's Crest

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT

THIERRY NEUVILLE

5/10

Third quickest before his rear differential cooked itself on the second stage. Just when he should have been stretching his legs and chasing second, only the front wheels were driving his i20. Weekend pace went walkabout.

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT N

HAYDEN PADDON

9/10

By his own admission the times were coming courtesy of running order, but still he was comfortably the quickest of the Hyundais for the duration of the event – and this on his New Generation debut.

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT

DANI SORDO

5/10

Puncture in Fredriksberg cost the Spaniard a minute and the impetus to keep him in a fight for the bottom step of the podium. Would he have beaten Ostberg to third? Doubtful. Not bad showing for Dani though.

ABU DHABI TOTAL WRT

CRAIG BREEN

9/10

Couple of spins (one courtesy of a slow rear puncture) on day one, but otherwise Breen was faultless on what was the biggest rally of his life. Looked like he'd been a works driver for years...

RESULTS

FIA World Rally Championship, round 2/14, Rally Sweden, Karlstad, February 11-14

POS	DRIVER/ CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)/Julien Ingrassia (FRA)	Volkswagen Polo R WRC	1h59m47.4s
2	Hayden Paddon (NZL)/John Kennard (NZL)	Hyundai i20 WRC	+29.8s
3	Mads Ostberg (NOR)/Ola Floene (NOR)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+55.6s
4	Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR)/Anders Jæger (NOR)	Volkswagen Polo R WRC	+1m10.8s
5	Ott Tanak (EST)/Raigo Molder (EST)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+1m50.7s
6	Dani Sordo (ESP)/Marc Marti (ESP)	Hyundai i20 WRC	+2m24.0s
7	Henning Solberg (NOR)/Ilka Minor-Petrasko (AUT)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+2m40.0s
8	Craig Breen (IRL)/Scott Martin (GBR)	Citroen DS3 WRC	+2m44.6s
9	Elfyn Evans (GBR)/Craig Parry (GBR)	Ford Fiesta R5	+5m17.0s
10	Teemu Suninen (FIN)/Mikko Markkula (FIN)	Skoda Fabia R5	+5m31.6s
14	Thierry Neuville (BEL)/Nicolas Gilsoul (BEL)	Hyundai i20 WRC	+7m10.7s
19	Khalid Al-Qassimi (UAE)/Chris Patterson (GBR)	Citroen DS3 WRC	+9m48.1s
23	Kris Meeke (GBR)/Paul Nagle (IRL)	Citroen DS3 WRC	+13m56.8s
24	Valeriy Gorbunov (UKR)/Volodymyr Korsya (UKR)	Mini John Cooper Works WRC	+14m14.5s
26	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)/Miikka Anttila (FIN)	Volkswagen Polo R WRC	+16m58.0s
34	Mait Maarend (EST)/Mihkel Kapp (EST)	Mini John Cooper Works WRC	+38m10.3s
R	Yazeed Al-Rajhi (SA)/Michael Orr (GBR)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	accident
R	Eric Camilli (FRA)/Nicolas Klinger (FRA)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	accident
R	Lorenzo Bertelli (ITA)/Simone Scattolon (ITA)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	personal

Per Eklund marked the 40th anniversary of Sweden win



CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS

DRIVERS		
POS	DRIVERS	PTS
1	Sebastien Ogier	56
2	Andreas Mikkelsen	33
3	Mads Ostberg	27
4	Hayden Paddon	18
5	Dani Sordo	18
6	Ott Tanak	16
7	Thierry Neuville	15
8	Stephane Lefebvre	10
9	Elfyn Evans	6
10	Henning Solberg	6

MANUFACTURERS

POS	TEAMS	PTS
1	Volkswagen Motorsport	54
2	Hyundai Motorsport	49
3	Volkswagen Motorsport II	30
4	M-Sport WRT	27
5	DMACK World Rally Team	18
6	Hyundai Motorsport N	14

Mads Ostberg scored Ford's first podium of the year with a solid third place

NEXT RALLY

Can anyone knock Ogier off his perch?

RALLY MEXICO
MARCH 3-6

BTRDA ROUND ONE: CAMBRIAN RALLY

Timing issues pass win from Payne to Francis as BTRDA opens in dramatic style. By **Jack Benyon**

Photos: Whittle Photographic

IN BRIEF

Crew finally finish

Matthew Jackson and Claire Williams finished their first gravel rally in over a year in 36th overall. Jackson, who won the John Easson Award in 2015, suffered multiple engine failures last year and failed to finish either the Nicky Grist or Malcolm Wilson rallies as a result of the problems. Brother Jonathan, co-driving for Meirion Evans, and father Tony were on hand to congratulate the duo. Williams was the top lady co-driver.

Hunter's Fiesta Evo

Hugh Hunter's Fiesta R5 will embark on the long journey to Cockermouth this week as the Welshman looks to have his car upgraded with the new Evo engine pack. Hunter will compete in the BRC this year along with Rhys Yates, who he beat to fifth overall on a countback. Third placed Euan Thorburn, also heading to the BRC, will get a power upgrade as the ECU from his Peugeot 208 T16 will go to France for improvements.

McClure rolls it

Aaron McClure faces a race against time to repair his Mitsubishi Lancer E9 after a roll on the Cambrian. The popular driver, partnered by American Alex Kihurani for the first time, was on the pace of the NR4 class leaders before a hidden rock on SS3 caused the roll at slow speed. He'll assess the damage before evaluating if a return for the Malcolm Wilson Rally is viable.

Stone gravel return

Tarmac specialist John Stone returned to gravel a week after he retired from the North West Stages in his new Fiesta S2000 2.5-litre car. Stone was campaigning his Peugeot 206 and finished 68th overall and eighth in class after retiring on the last two Cambrians he entered in '14 and '15.

Familiar R2 back

Bob Vardy gave a familiar Ford Fiesta R2 a run on the Cambrian. The car, in which he made his rally debut on the event in October last year, was driven to B10 class honours by Rhys Yates in 2015. The R2 remains in the black and day-glow green livery used by Yates. Vardy managed third in class along with experienced co-driver Sarah Ceen, who is the co-owner of the MSL Motorsport outfit which prepares Fiesta R5s in the BRC, Scottish and Norwegian championships.

Jordan competition

The beautifully turned out Ford Escort Mk1 of Robin Shuttleworth headed Class H1, with Barry Jordan retiring on SS3. Jordan – in a Hillman Avenger – was almost unchallenged on his way to H1 class success last year with a shortage of entries in the category, but Shuttleworth was joined by John Edwin Midgley at the finish as the only two finishers in the division.

Evans debuts R2T

Meirion Evans finished inside the top 20 overall on his competitive debut in his Ford Fiesta R2T. Evans and Jonathan Jackson finished 19th and third in class B11 which they were placed in because of the turbo on the one-litre car. The two cars ahead were both rear-wheel-drive Ford Escort Mk2s.

LATE DRAMA AS FRANCIS WINS



A timing rejig gave Francis the home win



Payne steered the newly-liveried Simpson Ford Fiesta to second overall



Spin cost Thorburn chance at victory but pace was encouraging in 208

As the champagne flowed on the Llandudno promenade, Charlie Payne thought he'd scored a fairytale victory. He was victorious on his return to the series after winning the last BTRDA round he'd entered.

But by the time Wales had beaten Scotland in the Six Nations rugby, Wales had also beaten Yorkshire as Payne's win was overturned and Luke Francis handed victory.

The initial result had been decided on a count back, with Payne and Francis finishing on the same time. But an updated stage time gave Francis one second back, and that's all he needed to win his first BTRDA event overall.

The rally started in somewhat unusual circumstances as the first round of the BTRDA, with the traditional curtain-raiser – the Wydean Rally – missing in 2016. The organisers of the Cambrian had done an excellent job to organise the event twice in four months, with a lot of the team also dedicating time to Rally GB.

Payne made the best start to the rally in his Ford Fiesta S2000 with Focus WRC engine, topping the charts ahead of number one seed Euan Thorburn in stage one. The Scot was competing for the first time in the Peugeot 208 T16 R5 he will campaign in the British championship. Third in the times was the intriguing Connor McCloskey, 2013 BTRDA runner-up, using a Mini WRC prepared by Derek McGeehan and repaired from the Galway

Rally where Tim McNulty had a disagreement with a field.

Francis could only manage fourth quickest but was fastest on the next before loose steering on his lightweight B13 Mitsubishi Lancer E9 slowed him down on SS3.

Thorburn and Payne followed in SS2 with Payne leading Thorburn and Francis outright. McCloskey dropped away after a broken control arm on his Mini. Although he initially maintained fourth, he slipped behind Rhys Yates after SS3, Penmachno.

Having started rallying in a Fiesta R2 just over a year before, Yates, now armed with a Fiesta R5, had gone fourth and second on SS2 and SS3 respectively having lost time with an overshoot on SS1. The Chesterfield driver's rapid rise in national rallying was in full force as he trailed future BRC rival Thorburn by just four seconds on SS3, to end the loop 22s down on Payne in what was his third gravel rally in a four-wheel-drive car.

With the control arm fixed, McCloskey was bang on form, taking best time on SS4, Clocaenog East. He had noted that he wouldn't be pushing too hard as he is playing a longer game, fighting for the championship. But having not rallied much in 2014, there was no sign of rustiness from driver or co-driver Damien Duffin.

Francis followed to take the lead from Payne with two notable drivers struggling. Steve Perez, the 2010 and 2014 BTRDA champion, had some issues in the morning and was off the pace, he'd be out by SS4 with a rear arm bearing broken. Meanwhile, Hugh Hunter, another driver warming up for the BRC, had an off on SS2 after the

‘Ellis makes use of extra traction at Goodwood’
South Downs Stages report, p27



STAGE WINNERS

- SS1, Gwydyr**
4.67 miles
Charlie Payne/Carl Williamson (Ford Fiesta) 5m23s
- SS2, Elsi**
5.69 miles
Luke Francis/John H Roberts (Mitsubishi Lancer E9) 7m38s
- SS3, Penmachno**
4.96 miles
Euan Thorburn/Paul Beaton (Peugeot 208 T16 R5) 5m28s
- SS4, Clocaenog East**
6.47 miles
Connor McCloskey/Damien Duffin (Mini WRC) 6m39s
- SS5, Alwen**
6.47 miles
Thorburn/Beaton 6m14s
- SS6, Gwydyr**
4.67 miles
Payne/Williamson 5m22s
- SS7, Elsi 2**
5.69 miles
Thorburn/Beaton 7m43s
- SS8, Great Orme**
2.95 miles
Francis/Roberts 2m40s



Furby:MG ace

CLASS AND CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS



Brick:rapid in his Vauxhall Nova and took 1400S

- RF1.0:** Roger Lovatt/Osian Owen (Nissan Micra)
RF1.4: Dominic Hodge/Stefan Arndt (Nissan Micra)
RF1.6: Des Fletcher/Bridge Carey (Renault Twingo)
1400C: Rory Jones/Tom Hughes (MG ZR)
1400S: Dave Brick/Phil Clarke (Vauxhall Nova)
H1: Robin Shuttleworth/Ronnie Roughead (Ford Escort Mexico Mk1)
H2: Dave Forrest/Charlie Carter (Escort Mk2)
H3: Theo Bengry/Les Forsbrook (Ford Escort Mk2)
N3: Owain Rowlands/Tom Jordan (Ford Fiesta ST)
NR4: Paul Davy/Roger Allan (Subaru Impreza)
B10: Josh Cornwell/Dai Roberts (Ford Fiesta R2)
B11: John Rowlands/Glenn Latham (Escort)
B12: Phil Burton/Mal Capstick (Escort)
B13: Luke Francis/John H Roberts (Lancer E9)
B14: Charles Payne/Carl Williamson (Fiesta)
Historic cup: Bengry/Forsbrook
Rally First overall driver: Lovatt
Rally First overall co-driver: Owen
ST Trophy: Rowlands/Jordan
MG ZR Rally Challenge: Sheldon Furby/Carrie Rogers
Junior Driver: Bob Vardy (Ford Fiesta R2)
Junior co-driver: Osian Owen
Senior driver: Hodge
Senior co-driver: John Roberts
Lady Driver: Emily Retallick
Lady co-driver: Claire Williams

Rowlands stars on inaugural ST Trophy event

Owain Rowlands opened a new era for the M-Sport-built Ford Fiesta ST as the BTRDA-supporting ST Trophy got underway in Llandudno. Rowlands had a relatively subdued morning but, during the afternoon loop, he was down to only second and fourth gear at his disposal. He still managed to take an impressive 34th overall in the NR3-spec car. The 22-year-old will lead the championship into the next round, but isn't certain to get there as he needs all important funding to remain in the series. He had borrowed championship

founder John Pritchard's car. Second was Tom Easson – nephew of John Easson who is remembered through the annual John Easson Award – albeit four minutes behind Rowlands. Easson reported a relatively straightforward day on his first gravel rally, having only competed in single-venue events up until now. The final finisher was Sam Bilham, a John Easson Award finalist in the past and former Next Big Step Award winner who spent five minutes in a ditch in Clocaenog East. However he didn't allow that

to stop him and recovered to 67th overall in his first event in the car having previously rallied a Micra. There were two entries in the class who didn't finish. Jason Lepley looked likely to fight for the class win before his gearbox went on stage three, ruling the former Junior F1000 champion out of action. He needed a scratch score as he is likely to miss multiple rounds due to school exams. The other entry missing at the finish was Jon Ambler/Doug Chivers after a wheel bearing went on their ST on SS4.



Rowlands did a brilliant job finishing the rally with only two gears, as lead battle with Lepley never materialised

STAR OF THE RALLY



Rhys Yates and Tom Woodburn top a number of worthy contenders for MN's choice of Star of the Rally. After a shaky first stage with an overshoot, the crew were bang on the pace of their fellow future British Rally Championship contenders using the round as a test. Yates continues to improve his speed having only made his gravel debut in a Ford Fiesta R2 a year ago, while Woodburn adapted well to a change of calling style on the day, repeating notes occasionally when he was prompted

RESULTS

REIS Ravenol BTRDA Rally Series, round one of nine, Cambrian Rally, Feb 13			
POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Luke Francis/John H Roberts	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	47m47s
2	Charlie Payne/Carl Williamson	Ford Fiesta	+1s
3	Euan Thorburn/Paul Beaton	Peugeot 208 T16 R5	+30s
4	Connor McCloskey/Damien Duffin	Mini WRC	+32s
5	Hugh Hunter/Andy Marchbank	Ford Fiesta R5	+38s
6	Rhys Yates/Tom Woodburn	Ford Fiesta R5	+38s
7	Stephen Petch/Michael Wilkinson	Ford Fiesta R5+	+1m17s
8	Stephen Simpson/Andrew Roughead	Ford Fiesta S2000	+1m33s
9	Wayne Sisson/Peter Foy	Mitsubishi Lancer E10	+1m57s
10	Peter Stephenson/Patrick Walsh	Ford Focus WRC	+2m21s

11 Barry Groundwater/Sean Donnelly (Lancer E10); 12 Karl Simmons/Mark Glennerster (Subaru Impreza S11 WRC); 13 Paul Davy/Roger Allan (Impreza); 14 Simon Rogers/Wyn Davies (Lancer E9); 15 John Rowlands/Glenn Latham (Ford Escort Mk2); 16 Gavin Edwards/Caron Tomlinson (Escort Mk2); 17 Roland Llewellyn/Ian Lawrence (Lancer E10); 18 Phil Burton/Mal Capstick (Escort); 19 Meirion Evans/Jonathan Jackson (Fiesta R2T); 20 Toni Carannante/Chris Williams (Impreza ST).

throttle stuck open. Aside from that, he was back on the pace quickly. Thorburn wrote off his chances of a win by dropping over 40s to the leaders on Clocaenog East. There was no damage on the car after a spin but Thorburn has his mind set on Mid Wales in March, and wasn't going to put that in jeopardy. He was sixth and 41s down overall after the incident. With Thorburn out of contention, it was left to Francis and Payne to fight it out in the kind of close battle that became a familiar feature in the second half of last season. After four stages, Francis was the leader but his seventh fastest time on stage five, Alwen, gave Payne the advantage. Francis was much closer on stage six, former Rally GB test Gwydyr. That left eight seconds in it heading into the final two runs. Crews reported Elsi to be rutted and not in the best condition, and Payne capitalised in his Fiesta to lead heading into the final stage by 10s. That gap

might have been manageable against Francis on any other stage in the country. Except this one. The Great Orme, which caught out Sebastien Ogier in 2011, is something of a special stage for Francis and co-driver John H Roberts and the pair set off with a major dose of *deja vu*. On the Cambrian last November, the home crew needed 10s to jump Josh Moffett for second place overall, and they pulled it off with a 2m38s. In 2016 they managed a 2m40s to take what turned out to be the overall victory by a second. It was the perfect start to the season for Francis as he also scored maximum points towards the Welsh championship which also got underway in Llandudno. Payne was in the situation nobody wanted to see, having celebrated the win with co-driver Carl Williamson only to have it so cruelly taken away. Thorburn hit back to take third having set scratch times through stages

five and seven, happy with the pace of the Peugeot ahead of his assault on the BRC. For McCloskey it was mission accomplished as he and Duffy held onto fourth, acknowledging taking his foot off the gas slightly with the rest of the season in mind. With the lead battle throwing up sparks of drama, there was more further back as the R5s of Hunter and Yates battled down to the wire. Hunter's experience of the Orme asphalt allowed him to tie with Yates. On another countback, a faster SS1 time for Hunter gave him the spot. But as Yates' father John had said in service after SS3: "We could pack up and go home now. We're really pleased with the pace." Stephen Petch had a day to forget in his Fiesta R5 with mechanical issues and errors leaving him seventh, one place in front of Stephen Simpson in his underpowered Fiesta S2000. Wayne Sisson, debuting his Lancer E10 B13, was ninth ahead of Peter Stephenson. ■



Theo Bengry returned to the BTRDA to take H3 and Historic victory

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RALLY REPORTS



Photos: M&H Photography, Roy Dempster, Martin Walsh



Ellis avoided late off to take victory



Misfire didn't stop the Jones' Michelotto from landing historic

ELLIS TRIUMPHS IN SUSSEX RAIN

South Downs Stages Rally 2016

By Ian Harden

Organiser: Southsea Motor Club and Bognor Regis Motor Club.
When: February 13. **Where:** Goodwood Circuit, Sussex.
Championships: Hamilton Classic ACSMG, Jelf Motorsport ASEMC/AEMC. **Starters:** 55. **Stages:** 9.

Extra traction from four-wheel drive proved the key to success for Subaru Impreza driver Johnnie Ellis, as he and co-driver Marc Fowler overcame constantly changing conditions to take a 29s victory over Paul King/Alicia Miles' Ford Escort Mk2.

King led the field away, wheel-spinning into the morning murk as his Escort fought for grip on the wet track. Stuart and Simon Larbey

(Impreza) took the early lead but slowed on subsequent stages, dropping out of the top 10. This left new leader Ellis challenged by King for top spot, with a separate scrap for third between Steven Toney, Tim Mewett and Liz Jordan (Escort Mk2) and Christopher and Anthony Newton (Vauxhall Nova). Slightly behind, a three-way tussle for fifth raged between Ian Hucklebridge/Sam Cox, Stuart Cogger/Ade Summers (both Escorts) and Alex Cannon/Ray Keith (Impreza).

After four tests, the track dried in patches, making correct tyre choice critical. Ellis clung tenaciously to the lead, reporting no mechanical problems but "several wild moments" on patches of aircraft fuel, seeping onto

the track from the adjacent airfield.

King's Escort exuded a powerful smell of hot brakes, testament to his efforts to chase down his rival. "We're on wet tyres, and they've worked well so far. But the track's drying so I think we will change to intermediates," he said.

Toney held third, promoted after Mewett retired with a blown engine. But he was pressured by Newton who, despite reporting numerous sideways moments on the slippery surface was looking to equal or better his 2015 third place.

Due to time constraints stage five was cancelled but on the next run, Ellis came close to disaster. He collided heavily with a baled chicane, damaging the Impreza's front end. Fortunately he

lost minimal time and his mechanics repaired the Subaru with tape and plastic straps. They painted 'Ouch' on the repair, while Ellis and Fowler jokingly blamed each other for the near-miss. This was the duo's last drama and, when the rain returned for the final, dark, stages they set a brace of fastest times to consolidate victory.

King's mid-rally tyre change reaped rewards as he took runner-up spot, and living locally allowed him to send his service crew home to fetch spotlights for the late stages. "I simply forgot the rally finishes in the dark," he said.

Toney's all-day high pace was rewarded with third, while fellow Isle of Wight duo, Richard Weaver/James Pink (Escort Mk1) overhauled Newton

for fourth by one second thanks to storming runs on stages seven and eight. A three-way battle for sixth place was resolved in favour of Hucklebridge and first-time co-driver Cox, ahead of Cogger and Kevin/Lee Jones, whose misfiring Ferrari 308 also won the Historic class.

Results

1 Johnnie Ellis/Marc Fowler (Subaru Impreza) 32m 14s;
 2 Paul King/Alicia Miles (Ford Escort Mk2) + 29s;
 3 Steven Toney/Mark McCullough (Escort Mk2);
 4 Richard Weaver/James Pink (Escort Mk1);
 5 Christopher Newton/Anthony Newton (Vauxhall Nova);
 6 Ian Hucklebridge/Sam Cox (Escort);
 7 Stuart Cogger/Ade Summers (Escort Mk2);
 8 Kevin Jones/Lee Jones (Ferrari 308 Michelotto); 9 Alex Cannon/Ray Keith (Impreza); 10 Chris Molloy/Nick Yoward (Escort Mk2). Class winners: Russell Balogh/Robert Ginn (Nissan Micra); Newton/Newton; Harry Sherrard/Ivor Heading (BMW Mini Cooper); Cogger/Summers; King/Miles; Cannon/Keith; Jones/Jones.

McKinstry wins as McGarrity's bid for glory at Kirkistown misfires

Kirkistown Stages

By William Neill

Organiser: North Armagh Motor Club Ltd **When:** February 13 **Where:** Kirkistown Race Circuit, County Down
Championships: McGrady Insurance MSA Northern Ireland Rally Championship and Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland **Starters:** 78 **Stages:** six

With a stage to go, old rivals Derek McGarrity and Kenny McKinstry were tied on times on Kirkistown Stages, but a misfire put McGarrity out and the latter held on to win.

While McGarrity has Northern Ireland championship ambitions following a sixth title last year, McKinstry arrived undecided on his plans for the rest of 2016. But an early win could sway the choice for the Subaru Impreza S14 driver, who last won his home series in 2011 following two wins in the '80s.

McGarrity and Nigel Magee led after the 4.6-mile SS1 by 1.3s – the biggest gap on the tally between themselves and McKinstry/Aaron Faulkner until SS6. The advantage was reduced to one second after the repeat before a shorter SS3, measuring 4.1 miles, added a mere 0.1s to McGarrity's lead.

On SS4, McKinstry responded going 2.2s quicker to move into a 1.1s lead and with the tests getting shorter again, down to 3.6 miles, it was a close call heading into the final set of stages. But the misfire ultimately decided the result.

Another to have won the championship in the past, Peadar Hurson, completed the champions' podium in third along with co-driver Damien Connolly. Their Subaru Impreza had remained in that position throughout, 25s from matching winner McKinstry.

Despite some front damage to their car, Wesley Patterson and Adam Carson were fourth and two-wheel-drive winners in a Ford Escort Mk2. The crew finished SS1 in eighth and gained

a place on the repeat. But it was SS3 where they moved up three spots to their position, one minute off the podium.

The rally winner's daughter, Emma McKinstry, finished fifth in a WRC-spec Impreza. She lost the place to both Matthew McGaffin and George Robinson on SS3 but gained it back on SS4 to be placed seven seconds from Patterson. McGaffin was sixth and Robinson seventh.

Junior winners Josh and Tommy McErlean have two maximum point scores in 2016. This time they beat Ruairi Bell.

Results

1 Kenny McKinstry/Aaron Faulkner (Subaru Impreza S14 WRC) 27m24s; 2 Derek McGarrity/Nigel Magee (Ford Fiesta WRC) +13s; 3 Peadar Hurson/Damien Connolly (Impreza S10 WRC); 4 Wesley Patterson/Adam Carson (Ford Escort Mk2); 5 Emma McKinstry/Kenny Hull (Impreza WRC); 6 Matthew McGaffin/Andrew McGaffin (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 7 George Robinson/Tommy Speers (Lancer E9); 8 Alastair Cochrane/David Turkington (Escort Mk2); 9 Jonny Morrow/Simon Morrow (Lancer E9); 10 Clive Kilpatrick/Jay Colville (Lancer E9). Class winners: Josh McErlean/Tommy McErlean (Peugeot 107); Ian Dickson/Stephen Monaghan (Ford Fiesta ST); McGaffin/McGaffin; Colin Price/James Stevenson (Vauxhall Corsa); Kyle White/Sean Topping (Citroen C2 R2); Johnny Cargo/Andrew Straney (Escort Mk2); Alastair Cochrane/David Turkington (Escort Mk2); Patterson/Carson; Robinson/Speers; K McKinstry/Faulkner; Sam Ewart/George McMahon (Escort Mk2); Drew Wylie/Alan Harryman (Escort Mk2).



McKinstry: victorious

Moffett makes Irish rallying history with R5 victory in the forests

Willie Loughman Forestry Rally

By Brian Patterson

Organiser: Carrick on Suir Motor Club **When:** February 14 **Where:** Carrick on Suir **Championships:** Valvoline Irish National Forest Championship, Suirway Group South East Rally Championship **Stages:** 8 **Starters:** 58.

Sam Moffett, co-driven by James Fulton, followed up his fine fourth place on the Galway International earlier this month by taking victory in the Carrick on Suir forests in his new Ford Fiesta, an Irish landmark for the R5-spec car which took its first outright victory south of the border.

Patrick O'Brien, co-driven by Aine McGuigan in his Lancer E9, scored one of the best results of his career with second place. His cause was helped when expected frontrunner and current Forestry champion Josh Moffett became a non-starter and last year's championship runner-up, Mick O'Brien, was also absent.

Moffett moved into an early lead on the opening stage, six seconds faster than Patrick O'Brien, but on SS2 – the daunting Gurtreen test with its many jumps – Niall McCullagh, in an Mitsubishi



Moffett headed O'Brien

Lancer E10, set the fastest time and took the lead. Moffett was relegated to second.

Through stages three and four, McCullagh continued to set a stunning pace and, at midday service, held a 14.6s lead over Moffett. Reigning junior champion O'Brien was a further 13s back. Don Keating had been in the hunt but his Subaru Impreza suffered a puncture in stage two which set him back.

The afternoon stages were a repeat of the morning loop but with added rain and sleet making conditions tricky. Monaghan-based Moffett clawed back some time from McCullagh, reducing the gap to 6.3s after SS5. With stage six not run competitively, Sam Moffett moved back into the

lead on the next test as the unlucky McCullagh slid off the road in his Lancer.

Through the final stage, Moffett was able to pace it to the finish. His winning margin over Tyrone's O'Brien was in excess of a minute.

Such was the pace of the leading Ford Escorts that they finished in fourth, fifth and sixth positions overall, with Adrian Hetherington taking the two-wheel-drive victory from John Gordon and Mickey Conlon. All three were class winners.

Results

1 Sam Moffett/James Fulton (Ford Fiesta R5) 37m36.6s;
 2 Patrick O'Brien/Aine McGuigan (Mitsubishi Lancer E9) +1m03.6s; 3 Michael Carbin/Darragh Kelly (Lancer E4); 4 Liam Ryan/Keith Moriarty (Lancer E8); 5 Gerard Lucey/JJ Cremin (Lancer E8) 2m14.6s; 6 Adrian Hetherington/Gary Nolan (Escort Mk2); 7 John Gordon/Thomas Wedlock (Escort Mk2); 8 Mickey Conlon/Ciaran McPhillips (Escort Mk2); 9 Dermot Kelly/Greg Shinors (Lancer); 10 Hugh McQuaid/Enda Gereaghty (Escort Mk2). Class winners: Graeme Goller/Brian Ward (Honda Integra); Emmett Lyons/Tommy Cuddihy (Honda Integra); O'Brien/McGuigan; Moffett/Fulton; Robert Moffett/James O'Reilly (Ford Fiesta WRC); Ruari Maguire/Graeme O'Brien (Vauxhall Corsa); Mike Garahy/Seamus Cooke (Escort Mk2); Michael Fitzgibbon/Carrie Moroney Ryan (Honda Civic); Jason Walsh/Michael Walsh (Escort); John Gordon/Thomas Wedlock (Escort Mk2); Conlon/McPhillips; Hetherington/Nolan; Derek Mackeral/Daire Hayes (Vauxhall Nova); Michael Carbin/Darragh Kelly (Mitsubishi E4).

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SPORTING SCENE

ROUND-UP

Jerome Fack won his first BTRDA Sporting Trial in the opening round of the British championship on Sunday at the **Geoff Taylor Trial**. He took the prestigious Cleve Hills trophy with his daughter Jess passengering.

Hagley and District Light Car Club had found a new venue at Buildwas Leisure 4x4 Outdoor Centre near Ironbridge to test the 29 crews. Jerome Fack's identical twin brother and multiple ex-British champion John took the early lead in his MSR to lead at lunch by two points from Jerome.

Alastair Moffatt had purchased Richard Roberts' RB7 last week and revelled in it to hold third place at lunch. However, a couple of tough start hills soon dented his challenge to slide back to ninth in the car he used alongside historic rallying co-driving ace Phil Clarke.

Jerome Fack's tidy final round helped him take a very popular win after 15 years of trying. Fellow Cornishman Alan Ede had a good morning but put in a stunning afternoon to climb up to second overall. He also won the novice class in his live axle Kincraft. Josh Veale tied with Ede and completed the podium.

Bryan Walker had a steady drive to fourth and fourth different car ahead of John Fack, who tied with Andy Wilks. Steve Courts finished in seventh and second in the intermediate class after Jerome Fack's win. Fresh from his Gold Star win last month, Ian Veale could only manage 15th.

Guy Foster led the **Monaghan Autotest** for most of the 12 tests, taking a 17-second win over Steven Ferguson. However, on a drama-packed day, second place was enough for the Stewartstown driver to clinch his sixth Hewison title in a row, equalling the record of Eddie Peterson. Ferguson's only championship rival, Robin Lyons, retired with a broken output shaft, leaving Ferguson to chase Foster until he too suffered a transmission breakage on the 10th of 12 tests. His service crew carried out a complete engine/gearbox unit transplant, allowing him to complete the remaining two tests and take the title again.

Sporting Trial

Organiser: BTRDA **When:** Feb 14 **Where:** Buildwas Leisure 4x4 Outdoor Centre, Ironbridge
1 Jerome Fack (MSR) 18 marks; 2 Alan Ede (Kincraft) 23 marks; 3 Josh Veale (Sherpa); 4 Bryan Walker (Jedi); 5 John Fack (MSR); 6 Andy Wilks (RCAP); 7 Steve Courts (Facksimile); 8 Peter Fensom (Hamilton); 9 Alastair Moffatt (RB7); 10 Boyd Webster (Crosle).

Irish Autotest

Organiser: County Monaghan MC **When:** Feb 14 **Where:** Swan's Cross, County Monaghan.
1 Guy Foster (Mini Special) 562.3s; 2 Steven Ferguson (Mini Special) +170s; 3 Darren Quille (Westfield); 4 Ian White (Mini Special); 5 Chris Grimes (Mini); 6 Paul Fobister (Haigh Special); 7 Norman Ferguson (Mini); 8 Tom Devaney (Westfield); 9 Paul Phelan (Mini Special). Class winners: Chris Grimes; Steven Ferguson; Darren Quille, 1 Kieran McCarr (Starlet).

Thorne will handle this Ford Fiesta Supercar



Photos: fiaworldrallycross.com

THORNE LANDS OLSBERGS FORD

Up-and-coming racer gets top Fiesta for UK attack



Thorne: UK title aim

By Hal Ridge

Devon driver Jack Thorne will compete in the British Rallycross Championship this season in an OlsbergsMSE-built Ford Fiesta Supercar.

The 20-year-old former British Super1600 champion made his Supercar debut at the final round of the BTRDA Clubmans championship at Croft last November in a Ford Focus. He finished second.

The Ford Fiesta he will drive this year was used by Max Pucher in 2014 and run

by Pucher's World RX Team Austria squad for Austrian rally driver Chris Brugger at the Canadian and Norwegian rounds of the World Rallycross Championship last season.

"The Ford Focus I used at the end of last year was always going to be a stepping stone to see if I liked Supercars," said Thorne. "I loved it, so we've bought something a lot more modern. We're going to do the full British championship and hopefully a one-off round of the world championship if we can, but our focus is on the UK championship this season."

Thorne had hoped to test the Ford Fiesta prior to the opening round of British RX at Croft on March 6, but delays in receiving the car mean that he will first drive it properly at the opening round of the series.

"There were some delays getting the car over here because of all the snow in Austria, so now we're just going to focus on getting it ready for Croft," he explained.

Despite the upgrade in machinery and his pace shown in the Super1600 category, Thorne says that

2016 will be a learning year for him and his team.

"This year will be a steep learning curve for me, my dad and the mechanics that come with us," said Thorne. "I'm not going to go and potter around at the back, that's not me. I'll be hoping to win, but we'll just do the best we can all the time and see how things go. We have a lot to learn, I know that. The whole point in upgrading to this car is to be competitive and hopefully in the coming years I will do some European and world championship rounds. That's the plan."

Dubourg lands Andros Trophy title with victory

European Rallycross Championship ace Jean-Baptiste Dubourg took a win and a second place in the final weekend of the Andros Trophy at Saint Die Des Vosges to claim the ice racing crown.

It marked Dubourg's first title in the category's headline Elite Pro division. The French driver led the series from the opening weekend of the season and came out on top of title rival Franck Lagorce in the finale. Former

Formula One driver Olivier Panis finished second on the second day behind Dubourg and ahead of multiple Andros Trophy champion Jean-Philippe Dayraut and world rallycross driver Toomas Heikkinen.

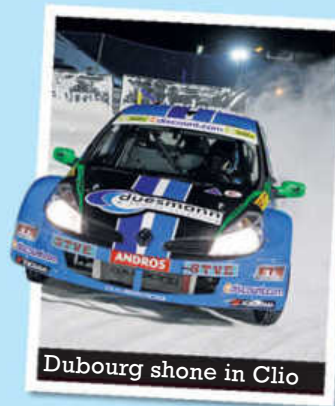
"What a final weekend," said Dubourg, who drove a Renault Clio in the series.

"I am proud and honoured to enter the exclusive club of drivers who have won this trophy, it's really amazing to

realise what is happening. The DA Racing team showed the level necessary to attract manufacturer backing, but for now, we're going to enjoy winning the title. It's a unique and unforgettable moment."

Lagorce finished the series second overall ahead of Benjamin Riviere, DTM driver Adrien Tambay and Panis.

Dubourg is yet to announce his rallycross plans for the 2016 season.



Dubourg shone in Clio



Interested participants get the chance to sample a trials car

Novices get the chance to sample Sporting Trials alongside experts

The BTRDA will host the first of its two sporting trial experience days on March 12 near Kidderminster in the West Midlands.

The event is designed to give interested prospective competitors a chance to sample the category and get a flavour of what the sport is all about.

Participants can spend the day driving top-level trials cars

under the close supervision of numerous past champions.

Competitor Richard Sharp sampled trials at an experience day three years ago and he is now a regular participant alongside his son Joe, who passengers.

"The day was fantastically organised and informative," said Richard Sharp. "Having experienced the cars, I had to have

a go and have now won the novice and intermediate class in the BTRDA Championship the last two years. It's an extremely friendly sport where advice is readily available from all."

Places need to be pre-booked with Julian Fack on 07812 108588 and are limited. Information is available at btrda.com. The second taster day will be in October.

Boak Jr aims for autocross glory

Racer Laura Boak, will compete in a new 1400cc Citroen C2 in the ANECCC Autocross Championship this season.

The Geordie driver is targeting the Junior category title in the new car, and a step up to rallycross at the end of the year.

Boak, daughter of British Rallycross SuperNational event winner-turned-Super1600 racer Michael, finished second three times in her debut season last year in a Vauxhall Corsa.

"I'm going to do the whole championship this year. The C2 will be a good upgrade from the Corsa," said the 15-year-old. "I really want the biggest trophy this year, that's what I'm aiming for."

Boak Jr's Citroen is being built by her father's MB Motorsport team so it is eligible for autocross and rallycross.

"I want to race in rallycross," she said. "We're going to try and do the Blyton round of the BTRDA Clubmans Championship at the end of the season."

Autocross is widely regarded as a solid learning ground for rallycross drivers.

The most recent driver to graduate from autocross to rallycross was Devon's Dan Rooke, who won the British RX SuperNational title last season in a Citroen AX, in his debut season.

Irish Rallycross is go after an entry boost

The Irish Rallycross Championship has secured enough entries for the first round of the series to be run at Mondello Park next month.

Mondello Park would have been forced to cancel the season opener and possibly the two remaining rallycross dates at the venue in 2016, if a total of 50 entries hadn't been achieved by the closing date.

Following a campaign to boost entries by the Irish Rallycross organising committee, the minimum number of drivers required was surpassed in advance of the closing date, and organisers are anticipating a number of late entries in the lead up to the event.

"It is a tribute to all our regular supporters in the way they have taken responsibility to get the numbers in and ensure a very positive start to the 2016 championship," said Motorsport Ireland rallycross committee chairman, John Dowling. "Regular competitor Peter McGarry has been the catalyst for this, supported by Leo Nulty, Colin Dowling and a big effort from Jenny Senior at Mondello Park. Currently we have just shy of 60 cars entered for the first round. It gives us a great boost to start the season. We can look forward with confidence and excitement to the year ahead."

KARTING

*'Abbi Pulling won
hat-trick of awards'*
BWRDC awards, below

Photos: kartpix.net



FKS CHAMPION TO GET FULLY FUNDED DRIVE

Partnership agreed between FOM-backed series and MSA Formula



MSA Formula and
FKS agree link-up

By Stephen Lickorish

A new partnership has been created between Formula Kart Stars and MSA Formula.

The champion of the Formula One Management-supported kart series will benefit from a fully-funded drive with leading squad Fortec Motorsports in the junior single-seater series, as part of a greater association between the two championships.

With Fortec also competing in the karting series, organisers believe other single-seater outfits could follow suit.

"This [partnership] is incredibly important," said FKS chairman Carolynn Hoy. "As is written in our logo, FKS is the road to Formula 1 through racing and education, and MSA Formula is the next part of that journey. We're aiming to help all the kids in our championship make the jump to MSA Formula."

"This partnership represents a major part of a credible pathway to Formula 1. We can now make sure the drivers are being seen by the right people and give them the best platform. I think it's going to be great and the interest

has been quite extraordinary. Fortec has announced it will run a team in FKS. It has got a huge wealth of experience and will bring that to the championship. I think that other teams will do the same as it gives them the chance to work with drivers from an early stage."

Fortec boss Richard Dutton said: "The plan is every year the champion will get a drive with Fortec. It's a great opportunity for drivers and I think it should work well."

"For us, having a team in the series is a chance to have a working relationship

with drivers before they reach MSA Formula."

Last year's FKS champion Ross Martin is the first to benefit from the partnership as he will race with Fortec Motorsports in MSA Formula this year.

"The opportunity this partnership has given me is fantastic," he said. "There's no other thing like this at any level in British motorsport. There's a real logical scope for progression now and it really sets you up for the future."

MSA Formula promoter Sam Roach added that many young drivers will benefit from this partnership.

IN BRIEF

Cadet weight

A minimum driver weight has been introduced in the Cadet class for this year. Drivers along with their mandatory racewear – such as overalls, helmets, gloves and boots – must now weigh at least 27kg. Optional items, like rib protectors or neck braces, are not included in this figure.

Pulling wins award

Junior TKM driver Abbi Pulling secured a hat-trick of awards at the British Women Racing Drivers' Club awards dinner earlier this month. The 12-year-old secured gongs for karting, top junior driver and the Mary Wheeler Trophy for overall club champion. Pulling joined the TKM class mid-way through last season and secured a number of race wins. "I was so thrilled and proud to win the top award," she said.

Formula Kart Stars gets Asian franchise

A new Asian franchise of the Formula Kart Stars championship will be launched in 2017.

As part of a five-year deal with Jiuxin Events, a new purpose-built karting circuit will be constructed in Asia. The company has previously overseen the build of the Shanghai International Circuit, venue of the Chinese Grand Prix.

FKS chairman Carolynn Hoy said: "This is a fantastic moment for FKS. Since 2012, we have worked to develop a championship format that can be franchised to existing grand prix host nations. Working with Jiuxin Events and its impressive history is the perfect fit for our inaugural franchise."

The British and Asian series will run independently of each other but drivers from both championships will be invited to take part in exchange programmes in the future.



FKS will get its first franchise

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MN does not always agree with opinions expressed in letters

MN SAYS...

Drivers must have a voice

After the WRC anger in Sweden, competitors must unify

Some (more) of the stages on Rally Sweden last weekend were nearly cancelled as drivers were concerned about safety on the route. Weather had done its best to ruin the event and made some of the roads perilous.

Although there was no strike, for want of a better word, it brought to light another interesting issue. The majority of drivers were concerned that decisions had been taken by other parties, and they felt that their worries about what lay ahead were not being heard. And you can certainly understand that point of view.

While it is all very well for the FIA bigwigs to say that team managers were consulted, they are not the drivers. Only the men at the wheel will know the size of the task they are being asked to perform. Team managers, by their very nature, are going to have a totally different agenda, much like the organising teams who are running the events – and paying through the nose to do so.

The drivers will meet again in Mexico, and it is pretty clear that they will form their own body to look after their own interests, and I see nothing wrong with that.

Matt James, deputy editor (Twitter: @MattJMNews)



YOUR PICS



MN.LETTERS@HAYMARKET.COM

Photographs must be of a good quality and please send no more than three images

ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!



Ashley Morris took this shot from a very watery rally at Pembrey in Wales



Geoffrey Bengough's Escort shot



Jamie Pinchbeck's shot of a classic Toleman F1 car...



...and another of a gorgeous Lotus-Renault monster

LAT STUDIO OPENING

The revamped LAT Studios opened its doors to nearly 100 industry professionals including book and magazine publishers, race teams, owner clubs, auctioneers and photographic and design agencies recently.

Guests were invited to enjoy the LAT gallery experience with an impressive selection of motor racing and road car imagery.

The LAT Studios offer world-class facilities and digital retouching services. The 100 square metre main stage is perfect for vehicle photography and video production. It is available for hire to external

clients, with or without photographer and assistant. Haymarket also operates an in-house video production team within the department.

For details, phone 0208 267 3000. The postal address for enquiries is LAT Photographic, Haymarket Publishing, Bridge House, 69 London Road, Twickenham, TW13SP. The studios and archive location (by appointment only) is at Unit V6, Vector Park, Forest Road, Feltham, TW13 7EJ, UK. Alternatively, LAT can be contacted at lat.photo@haymarket.com. The twitter address is @latphotographic.



The BTCC AmD Tuning Audi S3 was one of the main attractions



Guests were invited to see some of LAT's finest works

LETTERS

RIP David Stokes

I had known of David Stokes through reading as a schoolboy about his escapades in a Ford Escort in the 1970s as a Ford works-backed driver and him becoming British Castrol/Autosport Rally champion in 1976. After a massive accident in 1980 he decided to give up rallying and concentrate on running his family business.

This is where our paths first crossed as we were both from family baking businesses and competed with each other. With our mutual love of rallying we could only become friends.

David was very much his own man and told it to you as he saw it and if you didn't like it, well get over it. He was honourable with a good sense of humour and was good company to be out and about with.

In 1996, I persuaded him to get back to a rally car, my car, the first time in 16 years and he did Sweet Lamb. Then, in early 1997, he did the Wydean.

I remember at scrutineering they found the bag tank was out of date by about eight years and they made us change it and his brother Andrew found an old Ford Capri tank which he put in overnight.

David still managed 32nd overall in an old dilapidated Pinto-powered Escort: not bad considering what he was competing against at the time.

Not too long after that, he and his brother Andrew were out looking to buy a bodysell to build a car and for his return to the rallying scene.

His return to the sport saw his determination drive him to be one of the most competitive drivers out there. He did tell me one of the drivers told him they were having a nice jolly until he turned up. He was a class act in the car and was always there or thereabouts. If you have ever watched his in-car footage, you would see there is very little input in for the greatest amount of output, making him one of the most tidy and consistent drivers.

Year-in and year-out David put



Motorsport News, February 10

the effort in becoming British champion three times and runner-up on many occasions. In the latter years, with Guy Weaver at his side, they were a formidable team on any event.

David will be a massive loss in so many areas, especially to his wife Sue and all his family but also to the baking industry and of course to British rallying. David I will miss you.

Jonathan Brace
Via email

Off in a Huff

I very much enjoyed Rob Ladbroke's article on Rob Huff and his plans to return to the top step in the World Touring Car Championship (*Motorsport News*, February 3).

I stopped watching the WTCC because it was boring and we can only look forward to more of the same. The people who run this once great series don't see that one manufacturer dominating is tedious and a big turn off to motorsport fans.

It happened with Chevrolet before in that series and the same in rallying with first Citroen and now VW and also in F1 with Mercedes.

At the root of this is, of course, the FIA or (Famously Incompetent Association, as I think of it).

Mike Mace
Isle of Skye

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TV GUIDE



Daytona is on live on Sunday

The TV Guide is bereft of circuit racing at the moment. Luckily there is plenty of rallying action to keep people entertained.

The opening round of the BTRDA Rally Series – the **Cambrian Rally** – kicks us off, with some of the bumper entry using the round as a warm-up for the reborn, upcoming British Rally Championship. The series also boasts some new series for 2016 including the ST Cup (Saturday, 1025-1050hrs, Motors TV).

With last weekend's **Rally Sweden** in jeopardy seemingly all of last week, you can catch highlights of all the goings on this week. Elfyn Evans, Kris Meeke and Craig Breen uphold British and Irish honour, with Breen steering a works-spec DS 3 WRC for the first time this year. Watch on BT Sport 1 (Wednesday, 2230-2300hrs), or on Motors TV (Saturday 1240-1340hrs).

Finally, *MN*'s very own Circuit Rally Championship is back in the guide this week with January's **Brands Hatch Winter Stages** covered. Wet weather meant the event was treacherous and

brought about some shock results (Friday, 2135-2235hrs, Motors TV).

The final instalment of slippery stuff comes from the brilliant **Andros Trophy**. The ice racing series boasts ex-F1 drivers including Olivier Panis among its drivers, and the championship reaches its conclusion with the beautifully named Saint die des Vosges round (Wednesday, 2305-0115hrs, Motors TV).

Meanwhile, there is live Tarmac action available. One of the biggest sporting events of the year in America – the **Daytona 500** – returns the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series to action for another year, although will it be the same without the legendary Jeff Gordon? (Sunday, 1700-2200hrs, Premier Sports TV)

There's also a chance to catch up with the latest news and action in the all-electric **Formula E Championship**, plus highlights of the epic Buenos Aires race which took place earlier this month. The battles went right down to the wire (Saturday, 1730-1800hrs, BT Sport 2).

BOOK REVIEW

The Art Of Winning Race Car Design

Icon Publishing

RRP: £24.95

Bob Riley with Jonathan Ingram

Most recently known for the Riley and Scott sportscars that have been highly successful in US racing, Bob Riley has a career that stretches back almost six decades.

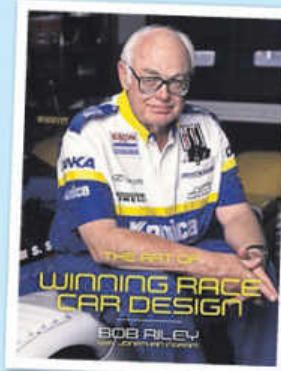
His route through motorsport has taken him from hot rods, through Indy-bred machines, the mighty Le Mans Fords, GT cars, NASCARs, Sprint Cars and in to the sportscar world.

While there is plenty of detail to keep the hardened technical brains interested enough, the detail that is contained within is wide ranging. Not only does Riley talk about the machines themselves, there are interesting insights into the many of the drivers, the teams and the colleagues he has worked with over the last 60 seasons – Riley is still working despite the fact he is well beyond his 80th birthday.

Given the subject matter, to truly enjoy the tome then the reader needs to have a pretty strong working grasp of the American racing scene.

If you have that, then you will find this book fascinating.

Throughout the book, it is



some of those who have worked with Riley and sampled some of his machines.

It adds a lot of colour behind the heavy technical detail and gives an insight into a humble and passionate man.

There is only one minor criticism: strangely, given the title of the book, the main image on the front page is of the man Riley himself. Surely one of his most iconic designs in full flight would have been more appropriate? Yes, they are on the rear of the dust cover, but there are some mouth watering chassis there.

That is a very minor quibble over an otherwise excellent work and an insight into a man who is part of the motor racing fabric but maybe one who has flown beneath the radar until now.

Matt James

LISTINGS

RALLYING SATURDAY

■ Inverness, Scotland

Arnold Clark Jurys Inn

Snowman Rally

Starts 0850hrs

Admission free

Web snowmanrally.co.uk

■ Blyton Park,

Gainsborough

Jack Neal Memorial Rally

Starts 0930hrs

Admission TBA

Web cdmconline.com

SUNDAY

■ Llandovery, Wales

Red Kite Stages

Starts 0830hrs

Admission free

Web redkitestages.co.uk

■ Abbeylax, County Laois,

Republic of Ireland

Birr Tarmac Stages Rally

Starts 0930hrs

Admission TBA

Web birrmotorclub.com

All details correct at time of going to press but please check



Red Kite Historics fun

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OUT WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 24

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